

PD KIDS

Stories for Children of All Ages



"Girl with a Kitten" by Jules Pascin (American (born Bulgaria), Vidin 1885–1930 Paris) via The Metropolitan Museum of Art is licensed under CC0 1.0

CAT AND CONEY

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *It's Like This, Cat* by Emily Neville

Nick and I have been friends pretty much since I can remember. Our mothers used to trade turns fetching us from kindergarten. Nick lives around the corner on Third Avenue, upstairs over the grocery store his old man runs. If anyone asked me _how come_ we're friends, I couldn't exactly say. We're just together most of the time.

Neither of us is a real whiz at sports, but we used to roller-skate and play a little king and stickball and ride our bikes around exploring. One time when we were about ten, we rode way over to Twelfth Avenue at the Hudson River, where the _Queen Mary_ docks. This is about the only time I remember my mom getting really angry. She said Pop ought to take my bike away from me, and he did, but only for about a week. Nick and I still ride bikes a lot. Otherwise we sit and do our homework or play chess and listen to records.

Another reason we're friends is because of this creepy little kid who lived down toward the corner, between me and Nick. He always tagged along, wanting to play with us, and of course in the end he always fouled up the game or fell down and started to cry. Then his big brother came rushing out, usually with another big guy along, and they figured they were entitled to beat us up for hurting little Joey.

After a while it looked to me as if Joey just worked as a lookout, and the minute me or Nick showed up on the block, one of the big guys came to run us off. They did little things like throwing sticks into our bike spokes and pretending it was just a joke. Nick and I used to plot all kinds of ways to get even with them, but in the end we mostly decided it was easier to walk around the block the long way to get to each other's houses. I'm not much on fighting, and neither is Nick--'specially not with guys bigger than us.

Summers, up in the country, the kids seem to be all the time wrestling and punching, half for fun and half not. If I walk past some strange kid my age up there, he almost always tries to get me into a fight. I don't get it. Maybe it's because sidewalks are uncomfortable for fighting, but we just don't do much scrapping for fun. The only couple of fights I ever had, I was real mad.

Come spring, Nick and I got restless hanging around the street, with nothing to do but stickball and baiting the super at Forty-six. It was so easy to get him sore, it wasn't even fun. Cat stayed out of that basement, but I wanted to get him really out in the open, where he could chase squirrels or something.

One day we rode our bikes up to Central Park. I put Cat in a wicker hamper and tied it on the back of my bike. He meowed a lot, and people on the street would look at me and then do a double take when they heard him.

We got up to Central Park and into a place they call The Horseshoe, because the parking area is that shape. I opened the lid a crack to look at Cat. He hissed at me, the first time he ever did. I looked around and thought, Gee, if I let him loose, he could go anywhere, even over into the woods, and I might never catch him. There were a lot of hoody looking kids around, and I could see if I ever left my bike a second to chase Cat, they'd snatch the bike. So I didn't let Cat out, and I wolfed my sandwich and we went home. Nick was pretty disgusted.

Then we hit a hot Saturday, the first one in May, and I get an idea. I find Nick and say, "Let's put Cat and some sandwiches in the basket and hop the subway out to Coney."

Nick says, "Why bring Cat? He wrecked the last expedition."

"I like to take him places, and this won't be like Central Park. No one's at Coney this time of year. He can chase around on the beach and hunt sand crabs."

"Why do I have to have a nut for a friend?" Nick moans. "Well, anyway, I'm keeping my sandwich in my pocket, not in any old cat basket."

"Who cares where you keep your crumby sandwich?"

So we went. Lots of people might think Coney Island is ugly, with all the junky-looking booths and billboards. But when you turn your back on them and look out at the ocean, it's the same ocean as on a deserted beach. I kick off my shoes and stand with my feet in the ice water and the sun hot on my chest. Looking out at the horizon with its few ships and some sea

gulls and planes overhead, I think: It's mine, all mine. I could go anywhere in the world, I could. Maybe I will.

Nick throws water down my neck. He only understands infinity on math papers. I let Cat out of the basket and strip off my splashed shirt and chase Nick along the edge of the water. No need to worry about Cat. He chases right along with us, and every time a wave catches his feet he hisses and hightails it up the beach. Then he rolls himself in the hot, dry sand and gets up and shakes. There are a few other groups of people dotted along the beach. A big mutt dog comes and sniffs Cat and gets a right and a left scratch to the nose. He yelps and runs for home. Cat discovers sand crabs. Nick and I roll around in the sand and wrestle, and after a while we get hungry, so we go back where we left the basket. Cat is content to let me carry him.

Three girls are having a picnic right near our basket. One yells to the others, "Hey, look! The guy went swimming with his cat!"

Cat jumps down, turns his back on them, and humps himself around on my sweater until he is settled for a nap. I turn my back on the girls, too, and look out at the ocean.

Still, it's not the same as it would have been a year ago. Then Nick and I would either have moved away from the girls or thrown sand at them.

We just sit and eat our sandwiches. Nick looks over at them pretty often and whispers to me how old do I think they are. I can't tell about girls. Some of the ones in our class at school look about twenty-five, but then you see mothers pushing baby carriages on the street who look about fifteen.

One of the girls catches Nick's eye and giggles. "Hi, there, whatcha watching?"

"I'm a bird watcher," says Nick. "Seen any birds?"

The girls drift over our way. The one that spoke first is a redhead. The one who seems to be the leader is a big blonde in a real short skirt and hair piled up high in a bird's nest. Maybe that's what started Nick bird-watching. The third girl is sort of quiet-looking, with brown hair, I

guess.

"You want a couple of cupcakes? You can have mine. I'm going on a diet," says the blonde.

"Thanks," says Nick. "I was thinking of going after some cokes."

"Why waste time thinking? You might hurt your head," says the redhead.

The third girl bends down and strokes Cat between the ears very gently. She says, "What's his name?"

I explain to her about why Cat is Cat. She sits down and picks up a piece of seaweed to dangle over his nose. Cat makes a couple of sleepy swipes at it and then stretches luxuriously while she strokes him. The other kids get to talking, and we tell each other our names and where we go to school and all that stuff.

Then Nick gets back on the subject of going for cokes. I don't really want to stay there alone with the girls, so I say I'll go. I tell Nick to watch Cat, and the girl who is petting him says, "Don't worry, I won't let him run away."

It's a good thing she's there, because by the time I get back with the cokes, which no one offers to pay me back for, Nick and the other two girls are halfway down the beach. Mary--that's her name--says, "I never saw a cat at the beach before, but he seems to like it. Where'd you get him?"

"He's a stray. I got him from an old lady who's sort of a nut about cats. Come on, I'll see if I can get him to chase waves for you. He was doing it earlier."

We are running along in the waves when the other kids come back. The big blonde kicks up water at me and yells, "Race you!"

So I chase, and just as I'm going to catch up, she stops short so I crash into her and we both fall down. This seems to be what she had in mind, but I bet the other kids are watching and I feel silly. I roll away and get up and go back to Cat.

While we drink cokes the blonde and the redhead say they want to go to the movies.

"What's on?" Nick asks.

"There's a Sinatra thing at the neighborhood," the blonde tells him, and he looks interested.

"I can't," I say. "I've got Cat. Besides, it's too late. Mom'd think I'd fallen into the subway."

"I told you that cat was a mistake," says Nick.

"Put him in the basket and call your mother and tell her your watch stopped," says the redhead. She comes over and trickles sand down my neck. "Come on, it'd be fun. We don't have to sit in the kids' section. We all look sixteen."

"Nah, I can't." I get up and shake the sand out.

Nick looks disgusted, but he doesn't want to stay alone. He says to the blonde, "Write me down your phone number, and we'll do it another day when this nut hasn't got his cat along."

She writes down the phone number, and the redhead pouts because I'm not asking for hers. The girls get ready to leave, and Mary pats Cat good-bye and waves to me. She says, "Bring him again. He's nice."

We get on the subway and Cat meows crossly at being shut in his basket. Nick pokes the basket with his toes.

"Shut up, nuisance," he says.



A LEGEND OF THE FLOWERS

(AUSTRALIAN FOLKTALE)

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Turquoise Story Book*, by Various

Long, long ago the great Byamee left the earth and went to dwell in the far-away land of rest, which was beyond the tops of the Oobi Oobi mountain. The earth became a dull and desolate place after he left it, for all the flowers that brightened the plains and hillsides ceased to bloom.

And since there were no blossoms the bees could no longer make honey for the earth children. In all the land there were but three trees where the bees lived and worked; and no one ever touched these sacred trees, because they belonged to Byamee.

The children cried for honey, and the mothers took little bark baskets into the woods to search for the sweet food. But they returned with empty baskets and said, "There is no honey except on the sacred trees. We will never touch Byamee's honey."

This obedience pleased the Great Spirit very much and he said, "I'll send the earth children a food as sweet as the honey for which they hunger. It shall flow from the Bilbil and Goolabah trees."

Soon were seen white, sugary specks on the shining leaves of these trees, and then came the clear manna, which ran along the branches and down the trunks, and hardened into sugar. The children were delighted with the sweet food, and all the people were thankful for Byamee's gift.

But they were not satisfied, for they still wished to see the plains and hillsides covered with blossoms. So deeply did they long for the beautiful flowers, which had left the earth, that the wise men finally said, "We will travel to the land of Byamee, and ask him to brighten the earth again with flowers."

They kept the plan and purpose of their journey a secret from the tribes, and sped away to the northeast. On and on they journeyed until they came to the foot of the great Oobi Oobi mountain, whose summit was lost in the clouds of the sky. They walked along the base of its rocky

sides, wondering how they could scale the steep ascent when suddenly they spied a foothold cut in a rock, and then they noticed another step and still another. Looking carefully upward, they saw a pathway of steps cut as far as they could see up the mountain side. Up this ladder of stone they determined to climb. On and on they went, and when the first day's ascent was ended the top of the mountain still seemed high above them. They noticed, too, that they were climbing a spiral path, which wound round and round the mountain. Not until the end of the fourth day's climb did they reach the summit of this mighty mountain.

And from a basin in the marble there bubbled forth a spring of clear, sweet water, which the wise men drank eagerly. Their hard journey had almost exhausted them, but the cooling draught filled them again with new life. At a little distance from the spring they saw a circle of piled-up stones. They walked to the center of it, and a voice spoke to them. It came from a fairy messenger of the Great Spirit.

"Why have the wise men of the earth ventured so near to the dwelling of Byamee?" asked the spirit voice.

And the men answered, "Since the great Byamee left the earth no flowers have bloomed there. We have come to ask for the gift of flowers, because the earth is very dreary without their gay colors."

Then the fairy messenger's voice said, "Attendant spirits of the mountain, lift the wise men into the abode of Byamee, where fadeless flowers never cease to bloom. Of these blossoms, wise men, you may gather as many as you can hold in your hands. After you have gathered the flowers the attendant spirits will lift you back into the magic circle on the summit of Oobi Oobi. From this place you must return as quickly as possible to your tribes."

As the voice stopped speaking, the men were lifted up through an opening in the sky and set down in a land of wondrous beauty. Everywhere brilliant flowers were blooming, and they were massed together in lines of exquisite colors, which looked like hundreds of rainbows lying on the grass. The wise men were overcome by the marvelous sight, and they wept tears of joy.

Remembering what they had come for, they stooped down and gathered

quickly as many blossoms as they could hold. The spirits then lifted them down again into the magic circle on the top of Oobi Oobi.

There they heard again the voice of the fairy messenger who said, "Tell your people when you take them these flowers that never again shall the earth be bare and dreary. All through the seasons certain blossoms shall be brought by the different winds, but the east wind shall bring them in abundance to the trees and shrubs. Among the grasses, on plains and hillsides, flowers shall bloom as thick as hairs on an opossum's skin. When the sweet-breathed wind does not blow,—first to bring the showers and then the flowers,—the bees can make only enough honey for themselves. During this time manna shall again drop from the trees, and it shall take the place of honey until the east wind once more blows the rain down the mountains and opens the blossoms for the bees. Then there will be honey enough for all. Now make haste and take this promise and the fadeless flowers, which are a sign of it to your people."

The voice ceased and the wise men, carrying the fadeless blossoms, began the journey back to their people. Down the stone ladder, cut by the spirits of the mountain, they went,—across the plains, over the moors,—back to the camp of the tribes. Their people flocked around them, gazing with wide-eyed wonder at the blossoms. The air was filled with a delicious fragrance, and the flowers were as fresh as when they were plucked in the land of Byamee.

When the people had gazed for some time at the beautiful flowers and had heard the promise sent to them by Byamee, the wise men scattered their precious gift far and wide. Some of the lovely blossoms fell on the treetops, some on the plains and hillsides, and ever since that far-off day the earth has been blessed with the gift of flowers. (Adapted.)



THE KING OF ERIN AND THE QUEEN OF THE LONESOME ISLAND

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Myths and Folk Tales of Ireland*, by Jeremiah Curtin

There was a king in Erin long ago, and this king went out hunting one day, but saw nothing till near sunset, when what should come across him but a black pig.

"Since I've seen nothing all day but this black pig, I'll be at her now," said the king; so he put spurs to his horse and raced after the pig.

When the pig was on a hill he was in the valley behind her; when he was on a hill, the pig was in the valley before him. At last they came to the sea-side, and the pig rushed out into the deep water straight from the shore. The king spurred on his horse and followed the black pig through the sea till his horse failed under him and was drowned.

Then the king swam on himself till he was growing weak, and said: "It was for the death of me that the black pig came in my way."

But he swam on some distance yet, till at last he saw land. The pig went up on an island; the king too went on shore, and said to himself: "Oh! it is for no good that I came here; there is neither house nor shelter to be seen." But he cheered up after a while, walked around, and said: "I'm a useless man if I can't find shelter in some place."

After going on a short space he saw a great castle in a valley before him. When he came to the front of the castle he saw that it had a low door with a broad threshold all covered with sharp-edged razors, and a low lintel of long-pointed needles. The path to the castle was covered with gravel of gold. The king came up, and went in with a jump over the razors and under the needles. When inside he saw a great fire on a broad hearth, and said to himself, "I'll sit down here, dry my clothes, and warm my body at this fire."

As he sat and warmed himself, a table came out before him with every

sort of food and drink, without his seeing any one bring it.

"Upon my honor and power," said the king of Erin, "there is nothing bad in this! I'll eat and drink my fill."

Then he fell to, and ate and drank his fill. When he had grown tired, he looked behind him, and if he did he saw a fine room, and in it a bed covered with gold. "Well," said he, "I'll go back and sleep in that bed a while, I'm so tired."

He stretched himself on the bed and fell asleep. In the night he woke up, and felt the presence of a woman in the room. He reached out his hand towards her and spoke, but got no answer; she was silent.

When morning came, and he made his way out of the castle, she spread a beautiful garden with her Druidic spells over the island,--so great that though he travelled through it all day he could not escape from it. At sunset he was back at the door of the castle; and in he went over the razors and under the needles, sat at the fire, and the table came out before him as on the previous evening. He ate, drank, and slept on the bed; and when he woke in the night, there was the woman in the room; but she was silent and unseen as before.

When he went out on the second morning the king of Erin saw a garden three times more beautiful than the one of the day before. He travelled all day, but could not escape,--could not get out of the garden. At sunset he was back at the door of the castle; in he went over the razors and under the needles, ate, drank, and slept, as before.

In the middle of the night he woke up, and felt the presence of the woman in the room. "Well," said he, "it is a wonderful thing for me to pass three nights in a room with a woman, and not see her nor know who she is!"

"You won't have that to say again, king of Erin," answered a voice. And that moment the room was filled with a bright light, and the king looked upon the finest woman he had ever seen. "Well, king of Erin, you are on Lonesome Island. I am the black pig that enticed you over the land and through the sea to this place, and I am queen of Lonesome Island. My two sisters and I are under a Druidic spell, and we cannot escape from this

spell till your son and mine shall free us. Now, king of Erin, I will give you a boat to-morrow morning, and do you sail away to your own kingdom."

In the morning she went with him to the seashore to the boat. The king gave the prow of the boat to the sea, and its stern to the land; then he raised the sails, and went his way. The music he had was the roaring of the wind with the whistling of eels, and he broke neither oar nor mast till he landed under his own castle in Erin.

Three quarters of a year after, the queen of Lonesome Island gave birth to a son. She reared him with care from day to day and year to year till he was a splendid youth. She taught him the learning of wise men one half of the day, and warlike exercises with Druidic spells the other half. One time the young man, the prince of Lonesome Island, came in from hunting, and found his mother sobbing and crying.

"Oh! what has happened to you, mother?" he asked.

"My son, great grief has come on me. A friend of mine is going to be killed to-morrow."

"Who is he?"

"The king of Erin. The king of Spain has come against him with a great army. He wishes to sweep him and his men from the face of the earth, and take the kingdom himself."

"Well, what can we do? If I were there, I'd help the king of Erin."

"Since you say that, my son, I'll send you this very evening. With the power of my Druidic spells, you'll be in Erin in the morning."

The prince of Lonesome Island went away that night, and next morning at the rising of the sun he drew up his boat under the king's castle in Erin. He went ashore, and saw the whole land black with the forces of the king of Spain, who was getting ready to attack the king of Erin and sweep him and his men from the face of the earth.

The prince went straight to the king of Spain, and said, "I ask one

day's truce."

"You shall have it, my champion," answered the king of Spain.

The prince then went to the castle of the king of Erin, and stayed there that day as a guest. Next morning early he dressed himself in his champion's array, and, taking his nine-edged sword, he went down alone to the king of Spain, and, standing before him, bade him guard himself.

They closed in conflict, the king of Spain with all his forces on one side, and the prince of Lonesome Island on the other. They fought an awful battle that day from sunrise till sunset. They made soft places hard, and hard places soft; they made high places low, and low places high; they brought water out of the centre of hard gray rocks, and made dry rushes soft in the most distant parts of Erin till sunset; and when the sun went down, the king of Spain and his last man were dead on the field.

Neither the king of Erin nor his forces took part in the battle. They had no need, and they had no chance.

Now the king of Erin had two sons, who were such cowards that they hid themselves from fright during the battle; but their mother told the king of Erin that her elder son was the man who had destroyed the king of Spain and all his men.

There was great rejoicing and a feast at the castle of the king of Erin. At the end of the feast the queen said: "I wish to give the last cup to this stranger who is here as a guest;" and taking him to an adjoining chamber which had a window right over the sea, she seated him in the open window and gave him a cup of drowsiness to drink. When he had emptied the cup and closed his eyes, she pushed him out into the darkness.

The prince of Lonesome Island swam on the water for four days and nights, till he came to a rock in the ocean, and there he lived for three months, eating the seaweeds of the rock, till one foggy day a vessel came near and the captain cried out: "We shall be wrecked on this rock!" Then he said, "There is some one on the rock; go and see who it is."

They landed, and found the prince, his clothes all gone, his body black from the seaweed, which was growing all over it.

"Who are you?" asked the captain.

"Give me first to eat and drink, and then I'll talk," said he.

They brought him food and drink; and when he had eaten and drunk, the prince said to the captain: "What part of the world have you come from?"

"I have just sailed from Lonesome Island," said the captain. "I was obliged to sail away, for fire was coming from every side to burn my ship."

"Would you like to go back?"

"I should indeed."

"Well, turn around; you'll have no trouble if I am with you."

The captain returned. The queen of Lonesome Island was standing on the shore as the ship came in.

"Oh, my child!" cried she, "why have you been away so long?"

"The queen of Erin threw me into the sea after I had kept the head of the king of Erin on him, and saved her life too."

"Well, my son, that will come up against the queen of Erin on another day."

Now, the prince lived on Lonesome Island three years longer, till one time he came home from hunting, and found his mother wringing her hands and shedding bitter tears.

"Oh! what has happened?" asked he.

"I am weeping because the king of Spain has gone to take vengeance on the king of Erin for the death of his father, whom you killed."

"Well, mother, I'll go to help the king of Erin, if you give me leave."
"Since you have said it, you shall go this very night."

He went to the shore. Putting the prow of his bark to the sea and her stern to land, he raised high the sails, and heard no sound as he went but the pleasant wind and the whistling of eels, till he pulled up his boat next morning under the castle of the king of Erin and went on shore.

The whole country was black with the troops of the king of Spain, who was just ready to attack, when the prince stood before him, and asked a truce till next morning.

"That you shall have, my champion," answered the king. So there was peace for that day.

Next morning at sunrise, the prince faced the king of Spain and his army, and there followed a struggle more terrible than that with his father; but at sunset neither the king of Spain nor one of his men was left alive.

The two sons of the king of Erin were frightened almost to death, and hid during the battle, so that no one saw them or knew where they were. But when the king of Spain and his army were destroyed, the queen said to the king: "My elder son has saved us." Then she went to bed, and taking the blood of a chicken in her mouth, spat it out, saying: "This is my heart's blood; and nothing can cure me now but three bottles of water from Tubber Tintye, the flaming well."

When the prince was told of the sickness of the queen of Erin, he came to her and said: "I'll go for the water if your two sons will go with me."

"They shall go," said the queen; and away went the three young men towards the East, in search of the flaming well.

In the morning they came to a house on the roadside; and going in, they saw a woman who had washed herself in a golden basin which stood before her. She was then wetting her head with the water in the basin, and

combing her hair with a golden comb. She threw back her hair, and looking at the prince, said: "You are welcome, sister's son. What is on you? Is it the misfortune of the world that has brought you here?"

"It is not; I am going to Tubber Tintye for three bottles of water."

"That is what you'll never do; no man can cross the fiery river or go through the enchantments around Tubber Tintye. Stay here with me, and I'll give you all I have."

"No, I cannot stay, I must go on."

"Well, you'll be in your other aunt's house to-morrow night, and she will tell you all."

Next morning, when they were getting ready to take the road, the elder son of the queen of Erin was frightened at what he had heard, and said: "I am sick; I cannot go farther."

"Stop here where you are till I come back," said the prince. Then he went on with the younger brother, till at sunset they came to a house where they saw a woman wetting her head from a golden basin, and combing her hair with a golden comb. She threw back her hair, looked at the prince, and said: "You are welcome, sister's son! What brought you to this place? Was it the misfortune of the world that brought you to live under Druidic spells like me and my sisters?" This was the elder sister of the queen of the Lonesome Island.

"No," said the prince; "I am going to Tubber Tintye for three bottles of water from the flaming well."

"Oh, sister's son, it's a hard journey you're on! But stay here to-night; to-morrow morning I'll tell you all."

In the morning the prince's aunt said: "The queen of the Island of Tubber Tintye has an enormous castle, in which she lives. She has a countless army of giants, beasts, and monsters to guard the castle and the flaming well. There are thousands upon thousands of them, of every form and size. When they get drowsy, and sleep comes on them, they sleep for seven years without waking. The queen has twelve attendant maidens,

who live in twelve chambers. She is in the thirteenth and innermost chamber herself. The queen and the maidens sleep during the same seven years as the giants and beasts. When the seven years are over, they all wake up, and none of them sleep again for seven other years. If any man could enter the castle during the seven years of sleep, he could do what he liked. But the island on which the castle stands is girt by a river of fire and surrounded by a belt of poison-trees."

The aunt now blew on a horn, and all the birds of the air gathered around her from every place under the heavens, and she asked each in turn where it dwelt, and each told her; but none knew of the flaming well, till an old eagle said: "I left Tubber Tintye to-day."

"How are all the people there?" asked the aunt.

"They are all asleep since yesterday morning," answered the old eagle.

The aunt dismissed the birds; and turning to the prince, said, "Here is a bridle for you. Go to the stables, shake the bridle, and put it on whatever horse runs out to meet you."

Now the second son of the queen of Erin said: "I am too sick to go farther."

"Well, stay here till I come back," said the prince, who took the bridle and went out.

The prince of the Lonesome Island stood in front of his aunt's stables, shook the bridle, and out came a dirty, lean little shaggy horse.

"Sit on my back, son of the king of Erin and the queen of Lonesome Island," said the little shaggy horse.

This was the first the prince had heard of his father. He had often wondered who he might be, but had never heard who he was before.

He mounted the horse, which said: "Keep a firm grip now, for I shall clear the river of fire at a single bound, and pass the poison-trees; but if you touch any part of the trees, even with a thread of the clothing that's on you, you'll never eat another bite; and as I rush by

the end of the castle of Tubber Tintye with the speed of the wind, you must spring from my back through an open window that is there; and if you don't get in at the window, you're done for. I'll wait for you outside till you are ready to go back to Erin."

The prince did as the little horse told him. They crossed the river of fire, escaped the touch of the poison-trees, and as the horse shot past the castle, the prince sprang through the open window, and came down safe and sound inside.

The whole place, enormous in extent, was filled with sleeping giants and monsters of sea and land,--great whales, long slippery eels, bears, and beasts of every form and kind. The prince passed through them and over them till he came to a great stairway. At the head of the stairway he went into a chamber, where he found the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, stretched on a couch asleep. "I'll have nothing to say to you," thought he, and went on to the next; and so he looked into twelve chambers. In each was a woman more beautiful than the one before. But when he reached the thirteenth chamber and opened the door, the flash of gold took the sight from his eyes. He stood a while till the sight came back, and then entered. In the great bright chamber was a golden couch, resting on wheels of gold. The wheels turned continually; the couch went round and round, never stopping night or day. On the couch lay the queen of Tubber Tintye; and if her twelve maidens were beautiful, they would not be beautiful if seen near her. At the foot of the couch was Tubber Tintye itself,--the well of fire. There was a golden cover upon the well, and it went around continually with the couch of the queen.

"Upon my word," said the prince, "I'll rest here a while." And he went up on the couch, and never left it for six days and nights.

On the seventh morning he said, "It is time for me now to leave this place." So he came down and filled the three bottles with water from the flaming well. In the golden chamber was a table of gold, and on the table a leg of mutton with a loaf of bread; and if all the men in Erin were to eat for a twelvemonth from the table, the mutton and the bread would be in the same form after the eating as before.

The prince sat down, ate his fill of the loaf and the leg of mutton, and left them as he had found them. Then he rose up, took his three bottles,

put them in his wallet, and was leaving the chamber, when he said to himself: "It would be a shame to go away without leaving something by which the queen may know who was here while she slept." So he wrote a letter, saying that the son of the king of Erin and the queen of the Lonesome Island had spent six days and nights in the golden chamber of Tubber Tintye, had taken away three bottles of water from the flaming well, and had eaten from the table of gold. Putting this letter under the pillow of the queen, he went out, stood in the open window, sprang on the back of the lean and shaggy little horse, and passed the trees and the river unharmed.

When they were near his aunt's house, the horse stopped, and said: "Put your hand into my ear, and draw out of it a Druidic rod; then cut me into four quarters, and strike each quarter with the rod. Each one of them will become the son of a king, for four princes were enchanted and turned into the lean little shaggy horse that carried you to Tubber Tintye. When you have freed the four princes from this form you can free your two aunts from the spell that is on them, and take them with you to Lonesome Island."

The prince did as the horse desired; and straightway four princes stood before him, and thanking him for what he had done, they departed at once, each to his own kingdom.

The prince removed the spell from his aunts, and, travelling with them and the two sons of the queen of Erin, all soon appeared at the castle of the king.

When they were near the door of their mother's chamber, the elder of the two sons of the queen of Erin stepped up to the prince of Lonesome Island, snatched the three bottles from the wallet that he had at his side, and running up to his mother's bed, said: "Here, mother, are the three bottles of water which I brought you from Tubber Tintye."

"Thank you, my son; you have saved my life," said she.

The prince went on his bark and sailed away with his aunts to Lonesome Island, where he lived with his mother seven years.

When seven years were over, the queen of Tubber Tintye awoke from her

sleep in the golden chamber; and with her the twelve maidens and all the giants, beasts, and monsters that slept in the great castle.

When the queen opened her eyes, she saw a boy about six years old playing by himself on the floor. He was very beautiful and bright, and he had gold on his forehead and silver on his poll. When she saw the child, she began to cry and wring her hands, and said: "Some man has been here while I slept."

Straightway she sent for her Seandallglic (old blind sage), told him about the child, and asked: "What am I to do now?"

The old blind sage thought a while, and then said: "Whoever was here must be a hero; for the child has gold on his forehead and silver on his poll, and he never went from this place without leaving his name behind him. Let search be made, and we shall know who he was."

Search was made, and at last they found the letter of the prince under the pillow of the couch. The queen was now glad, and proud of the child.

Next day she assembled all her forces, her giants and guards; and when she had them drawn up in line, the army was seven miles long from van to rear. The queen opened through the river of fire a safe way for the host, and led it on till she came to the castle of the king of Erin. She held all the land near the castle, so the king had the sea on one side, and the army of the queen of Tubber Tintye on the other, ready to destroy him and all that he had. The queen sent a herald for the king to come down.

"What are you going to do?" asked the king when he came to her tent. "I have had trouble enough in my life already, without having more of it now."

"Find for me," said the queen, "the man who came to my castle and entered the golden chamber of Tubber Tintye while I slept, or I'll sweep you and all you have from the face of the earth."

The king of Erin called down his elder son, and asked: "Did you enter the chamber of the queen of Tubber Tintye?"

"I did."

"Go, then, and tell her so, and save us."

He went; and when he told the queen, she said: "If you entered my chamber, then mount my gray steed."

He mounted the steed; and if he did, the steed rose in the air with a bound, hurled him off his back, in a moment, threw him on a rock, and dashed the brains out of his head.

The king called down his second son, who said that he had been in the golden chamber. Then he mounted the gray steed, which killed him as it had his brother.

Now the queen called the king again, and said: "Unless you bring the man who entered my golden chamber while I slept, I'll not leave a sign of you or anything you have upon the face of the earth." Straightway the king sent a message to the queen of Lonesome Island, saying: "Come to me with your son and your two sisters!"

The queen set out next morning, and at sunset she drew up her boat under the castle of the king of Erin. Glad were they to see her at the castle, for great dread was on all.

Next morning the king went down to the queen of Tubber Tintye, who said: "Bring me the man who entered my castle, or I'll destroy you and all you have in Erin this day."

The king went up to the castle; immediately the prince of Lonesome Island went to the queen.

"Are you the man who entered my castle?" asked she.

"I don't know," said the prince.

"Go up now on my gray steed!" said the queen.

He sat on the gray steed, which rose under him into the sky. The prince stood on the back of the horse, and cut three times with his sword as he

went up under the sun. When he came to the earth again, the queen of Tubber Tintye ran over to him, put his head on her bosom, and said: "You are the man."

Now she called the queen of Erin to her tent, and drawing from her own pocket a belt of silk, slender as a cord, she said: "Put this on."

The queen of Erin put it on, and then the queen of Tubber Tintye said: "Tighten, belt!" The belt tightened till the queen of Erin screamed with pain. "Now tell me," said the queen of Tubber Tintye, "who was the father of your elder son."

"The gardener," said the queen of Erin.

Again the queen of Tubber Tintye said; "Tighten, belt!" The queen of Erin screamed worse than before; and she had good reason, for she was cut nearly in two. "Now tell me who was the father of your second son."

"The big brewer," said the queen of Erin.

Said the queen of Tubber Tintye to the king of Erin: "Get this woman dead."

The king put down a big fire then, and when it was blazing high, he threw the wife in, and she was destroyed at once.

"Now do you marry the queen of Lonesome Island, and my child will be grandchild to you and to her," said the queen of Tubber Tintye.

This was done, and the queen of Lonesome Island became queen of Erin and lived in the castle by the sea. And the queen of Tubber Tintye married the prince of Lonesome Island, the champion who entered the golden chamber while she slept.

Now the king of Erin sent ten ships with messages to all the kings of the world, inviting them to come to the wedding of the queen of Tubber Tintye and his son, and to his own wedding with the queen of Lonesome Island.

The queen removed the Druidic spells from her giants, beasts, and

monsters; then went home, and made the prince of Lonesome Island king of Tubber Tintye and lord of the golden chamber.



THE TWO FOXES, THE MOLE, AND THE CROWS

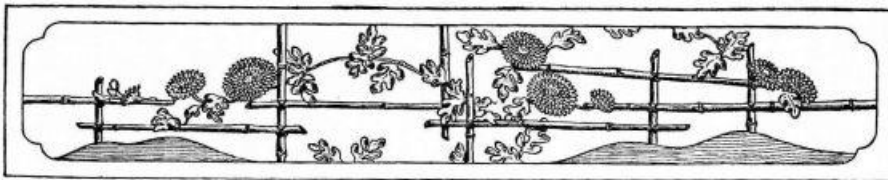
The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Aino Folk-Tales*, by Basil Hall Chamberlain

Two brother foxes consulted together thus: "It would be fun for us to go down among men, and assume human shape." So they made treasures and they made garments out of the leaves of various trees, and they made various things to eat and cakes out of the gum which comes out of trees. But the mole[-god] saw them making all these preparations. So the mole made a place like a human village, and placed himself in it under the disguise of a very old man. The foxes came to that village; they came to the very old man's house. And the mole himself made beautiful treasures and made garments out of various herbs and leaves of trees; and, taking mulberries and grapes from the tops of the trees, he made good food. On the arrival of the foxes, the mole invited all the crows in the place and all sorts of birds. He gave them human shape, and placed them as owners in the houses of the village. Then the mole, as chief of the village, was a very old man.

Then the foxes came, having assumed the shape of men. They thought the place was a human village. The old chief bought all the things which the foxes had brought on their backs, all their treasures and all their food. Then the old man displayed to them his own beautiful treasures. The old man displayed all his beautiful things, his garments. The foxes were much pleased. Then the old man spoke thus: "Oh you strangers! as there is a dance in my village, it will be well for you to see it." Then all the people in the village danced all sorts of dances. But at last, owing to their being birds, they began to fly upwards, notwithstanding their human shape. The foxes saw this, and were much amused. The foxes ate both of the mulberries and of the grapes. They tasted very good. It was great fun, too, to see the dancing. Afterwards they went home.

The foxes, thought thus: "What is nicer even than treasures is the delicious food which human beings have. As we do not know what it is, let us go again and buy some more of it." So they again made treasures out of herbs. Then they again went down to that village. The mole was in a golden house--a large house. He was alone in it, having sent all the crows and the rest away. As the foxes entered the house and looked about them, they saw a very venerable god. The god spoke thus: "Oh! you foxes; because you had assumed human shape, you made all sorts of counterfeit treasures. I saw all that you did. It is by me, and because of this, that you are brought here. You think this is a human village; but it is the village of me, your master the mole. It seems you constantly do all sorts of bad things. If you do so, it is very wrong; so do not assume human shape any more. If you will cease to assume human shape, you may henceforth eat your fill of these mulberries and grapes. You and your companions the crows may eat together of the mulberries and of all fruits at the top of the trees, which the crows cause to drop down. This will be much more profitable for you than to assume human shape." Thus spoke the mole.

Owing to this, the foxes left off assuming human shape, and, from that time forward, ate as they pleased of the mulberries and the grapes. When the crows let any drop, they went underneath the trees and ate them. They became very friendly together.--(Translated literally. Told by Ishanashte, 11th November, 1886.)



CÆDMON THE COWHERD

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Early English Hero Tales*, by Jeannette Marks

A very great modern poet, Coleridge, who wrote "The Ancient Mariner," said that prose was words in their best order, but that _poetry was the best words in their best order_. This is a simple and good definition of poetry. Yet there is even more than best words in their best order

in the room beyond the door over which is written Poetry. Perhaps, however, beautiful words in their best order would always teach us to find what is beautiful and to love the good. I do not know. Do you?

Cædmon's poem, written about 670, marks the beginning of English poetry in Great Britain, for "Beowulf" was first sung in another land--the land of the conquerors of England--before it was brought to British soil. The verses of Cædmon's poetry are as stormy as the sea which beats at the bottom of the cliffs of Whitby, on which rose the monastery of Streonshalh. Cædmon was at first a servant in this monastery, but when the power to sing came to him it lifted not only Cædmon himself to something better than he had been; it has also lifted men and women ever since to better ways of thinking and feeling and to greater happiness than they would ever have had without English poetry. Bede, who wrote about Cædmon, said, "He did not learn the art of poetry from men, nor of men, but from God." Cædmon sang many songs, chiefly songs about stories in the Bible. Our first poetry was religious. "Dark and true and tender is the north," and true and tender is all great English poetry since that most precious of all the golden doors was thrown open in the Great Palace of English Literature.

Almost more interesting than the stories which Cædmon resung for the world is the story of the way the gift of song came to Cædmon.

* * * * *

One day a little boy stood by a fishing-boat from which he had just leaped. He dug his toe in the sand and looked up to the edge of the rocky cliff above him.

"What dost see, lad?" said his uncle, who was tossing his catch of fish to the sand; "creatures of the mist in the clouds yonder?"

"Nay, uncle," answered Finan, "there is no Grendel in the clouds. Last night at the Hall a man sang to the harp that Grendel was a moor-treader. Also he told of the deeds of the hero Beowulf, and he said that Beowulf had killed Grendel."

Finan's eyes were on the distant moor, which was the color of flame in the evening light. Already twinkling above were little stars bright as

the sheen of elves. There, he knew, for everybody said so, lived elf and giant and monster. There in the moor pools lived the water-elves. Across its flame of heather strode mighty march-gangers like Grendel, and in the dark places of the mountains lived a dragon, crouched above his pile of gold and treasure.

There stood the miraculous tree, of great size, on which were carved the figures of beasts and birds and strange letters which told what gods the heathen worshiped before the gentle religion of Christ was brought to England. There lived the Wolf-Man, too, so friendless and wild that he became the comrade of the wolves which howled in those dark places. There lived a bear, old and terrible, and the wild boar rooting up acorns with his huge curved tusks.

Nearer the village was the wolf's-head tree--more terrible tree than any in the mysteries of forest and fen-land. This was the gallows on which the village folk hung those who did evil. Finan could see the tree where it stood alone in the sunset light. And he heard the rough cawing of ravens as they settled down into its dark branches to roost.

"Caw, caw," croaked one raven, "ba-a-d man, ba-ad man."

"Caw, caw," sang another raven, "ba-ad."

Then they flapped their wings and settled to their sleep.

"Uncle," Finan said, "I will go up the cliffside."

The fisherman looked up. He heard the chanting from the church, and saw an immense white cross upright on the cliff's edge. But he knew not of what adventure little Finan was thinking.

"Aye," he said, "go. Perhaps you will see the blessed Hild."

So it came about that little Finan climbed the cliff on that evening which was to prove a night wonderful in its miracle. There was born that night that which, like the love of Christ, has made children's lives better and happier.

Finan reached the top of the cliff by those steps which were cut into

it, and then took the main road, paved and straight, which led toward the Great Hall. He went along slowly under the apple-trees. He saw a black-haired Welsh woman draw water. Little children not so big as Finan were sitting on the steps by their mothers, who were spinning in their doorways. He passed a dog gnawing a bone flung to it for its supper.

A cobbler, laying by his tools, looking up, saw Finan and greeted him. A jeweler was fixing ornaments on a huge horn he had polished. Carpenters were leaving a little cottage which they were building. The road was full of men--swineherds and cowherds, plowboys and wood-choppers from the forests beyond, gardeners and shepherds--all on their way to the Great Hall. Some men there were in armor, too, their long hair floating over their shoulders.

Inside the windows, which in those days contained no window-glass, torches and firelight would soon begin to flame, and mead would be passed. Already a loud horn was calling all who would to come.

Suddenly something sharp stabbed Finan, and he cried out.

A man, a woman, and a little child came rushing from one of the household yards, flapping their garments and screaming: "The bees! The bees!"

They had just found their precious hive empty. The bees had swarmed, and unless they could find them there would be no more sweet-smelling mead made from honey in that household that year.

Another bee stung Finan. And there they were clinging to a low apple bough just above his head. They hung in a great cluster, like a bunch of dark grapes.

"Dame," said a cowherd, who was in the road, to the people who were crying out for their bees, "yonder lad knows where the bees are."

Finan rubbed his head and looked up at the angry, humming swarm.

"Aye," he said, and laughed.

"Throw gravel on the swarming bees," called the cowherd, Cædmon.

The man and woman and Finan took handfuls of gravel from the roadside and flung them over the bees, and sang again and again, "Never to the wood, fly ye wildly more!"

Then they laughed, and the bees swarmed.

"Now," said Cædmon, who was a wise cowherd, "hang veneration on the hive, and if ye would have them safe lay on the hive a plant of madder. Then can naught lure them away."

When they reached the Hall folk were already eating inside. Little Finan saw Cædmon go in quietly, for Cædmon was attached to the Abbess Hild's monastery and had a right to go in and eat. Inside they were singing for the sake of mirth, and the torches and firelight were flaming.

Through the open window--for windows were always open then, and the word window meant literally "wind-eye"--Finan saw the harp being passed from one to another.

They sang many songs as the harp passed from hand to hand, songs of war and songs of home.

But when the harp was passed to Cædmon, who had charmed the bees, he shook his head sorrowfully, saying that he could not sing, and got up sad and ashamed and went out.

Little Finan wanted to shout through the window to him to sing about the bees. He did not dare, for he was afraid of being discovered. Instead he followed behind Cædmon. He wished to ask him why he could not sing. This he did not dare to do, either, but he went on to the fold where the cowherd had gone to care for the cattle. And there on the edge of the fold the little boy, unseen by the cowherd, fell asleep. Shortly afterward Cædmon, too, fell asleep.

It must have been near the middle of the night when the stars one and all were shining and dancing with the sheen of millions and millions of elves, and the sea down below the cliff was singing a mighty lullabye,

that little Finan started wide awake, hearing a voice speak.

"Cædmon," spoke a man who stood beside the sleeping cowherd, "sing me something."

Cædmon drowsily answered: "I cannot sing anything. Therefore went I away from the mirth and came here, for I know not how to sing."

Again the mysterious stranger spoke. "Yet you could sing."

And Finan heard the sleep-bound voice of Cædmon ask, "What shall I sing?"

"Sing to me," said the stranger, "the beginning of all things."

And at once Cædmon began to sing in a strong voice, and very beautifully, the praise of God who made this world. And his song had all the beat of sea waves in it--sometimes little waves that lapped gently on the shore and bore in beautiful shells and jeweled seaweed. But more often its rhythm was as mighty as ocean waves that tossed big ships.

Then the wandering stranger, hearing the beauty of the song, vanished. Cædmon awoke from his sleep, and he remembered all that he had sung and the vision that had come to him. And he was glad. He arose and went to the Abbess Hild to tell her what had happened to him, the least of her servants.

In the presence of many wise men did Hild bid Cædmon tell his dream and sing his verses. And he did as he was told, and it was plain to all that an angel had visited Cædmon. The Abbess Hild took him into the monastery, and she ordered that everything be done for him. And Cædmon became the first and one of the greatest of English poets. And even as Christ was born in a manger in Bethlehem, English poetry was born in a cattle-fold in a town which was called Streoneshalh, which means "Bay of the Beacon." And to mankind since Cædmon, the first English poet, English song has been a beacon to all the world.

* * * * *

If you open a book written in the English of to-day, it is easy to read it--just as easy as to understand the speech we use among one another. But the English of fifteen or sixteen hundred years ago would be difficult to read. There is an illustration of this English in a line from "Deor's Lament":

Thas ofer eode, thisses swa maeg.

It is easy to pick this out word for word, and see that it means, "That was overcome (or overpassed), so may this be." The English in that Great Palace, some of whose doors are more than twelve hundred years old, is the same English, just as the oak-tree two hundred years old is the same oak-tree, though different, that it was when planted. But you would find it difficult to read the English in which Cædmon wrote his great poems.

Old English poetry, too, seems as different from the poetry of to-day as the language we speak seems different from the language they used to speak. For one thing, old English poetry did not have rhymes.

Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee,
Gave thee life and bade thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?

This poem was written somewhat over a hundred years ago by William Blake, but it is modern and part of that brightest and most beautiful room of all English poetry--Nineteenth Century Poetry. What is a rhyme? You can tell if you will study this stanza from "The Lamb." You will see that "thee" of the first line rhymes with "thee" of the second,

that "feed" and "mead" rhyme, and that "delight" and "bright" rhyme just as "voice" and "rejoice." Old English poetry was different, too, in that it did not count the syllables in a line of poetry. If you drum on the table and count the syllables of the first and second lines, you will see that each has six, and the following six lines have seven syllables each, and the last two six each. Then if you drum a little more you will see that each of the first two lines has three accents or stresses, and the following six four accents or stresses each.

Then, you ask, what was this old English poetry like? Even if the syllables were not counted and there was no rhyme, it had accents just as our modern poetry has. Every line was divided into half verses by a pause, as, for example:

Warriors of winters young with words spake.

There are two accented syllables in the first half of this line, and one in the second. And now, instead of rhyme, what do you think the old English poetry had? Alliteration. That is a big word, but it is not nearly so difficult as it seems, for it means simply the repetition of the same letter at the beginning of two or more words. Here it is, the letter "w" that is repeated. It was poetry with alliteration and stress which little Finan heard on that night so long ago when the angel came to Cædmon and commanded him to sing.



THE EASTER DREAM OF MUN CHEE

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Little Almond Blossoms*, by Jessie Juliet Knox

Mun Chee had a wonderful dream one night. Being a little Chinese aristocrat, she had never played just as the common people's children play, and in her little heart she sometimes longed to get out, she and her two little brothers, and run wild through the narrow Chinese

streets, and to be as free as the winds, just as the children of poor people might do; but she could not do this. So much was due to her station in life, as she was to be a Chinese lady some far-off day. So one night,--just the night before Easter,--after she had fallen asleep on her couch of bamboo, she dreamed a dream as beautiful as a poor child--a child of a coolie even might dream, for dreams are free to all, rich and poor. Perhaps it was because she had gone to sleep wondering if her house would be visited by the Easter rabbit, of which an American friend had told her; perhaps--but then, it does not matter what the reason was, for suddenly she felt some soft little taps on her eyelids, and a warm breath fanned her cheek, and opening her eyes she beheld the dearest, cunningest little rabbit--a white one, with bright pink eyes. It was perched on the edge of her bed, and had awakened her by tapping her Oriental eyelids with its soft white paws. It looked so gentle that she loved it right away, and said: "Who are you?"

It replied in a tiny voice: "If it please your highness, I am the queen of the Easter rabbits; I thought you might like to go with me for a little visit to my realm, the beautiful Easterland."

"Oh, I likee go," said Mun Chee. "It must be all light to visit a queen. Yes, yes, I will go, but how?"

"Trust to me, and you shall arrive safely; I will carry you on my back."

"You? Why, you too small; I such a big girl; you no can cally me."

"Wait and see!" said Queen Bunny, and with that she began to grow and grow and grow, right before Mun Chee's astonished eyes, and pretty soon she was as big as a horse.

"Oh, how could you do it?" gasped the little Chinese girl.

"Because I am in league with the fairies, and have all power," the queen said. "Jump on my back, if it please your ladyship, and we will hasten away."

She jumped gracefully to the back of the rabbit, and clasped her plump arms tightly around its neck. They bounded up, up, until they were so high in the air that they could not see the world below.

“I neveh knew that labbits could fly,” said she.

“Well, all rabbits cannot fly,” said the queen, “only those of royal blood. There are rabbits and rabbits, you know, just as there are people and people. My sceptre is a white Easter lily, and whoever it touches is at once possessed of unlimited power.”

Now they came to the land of the birds, where they were fairly intoxicated with the beautiful music thrilling from the throats of these feathered songsters. Some of the trees were bright blue, and were filled with all kinds of blue birds; then a yellow tree, something like the acacia, was filled with canaries, making the air fairly alive with song. So they floated on, until the songs of the birds were but an echo.

Then came Candy-land. My! how good it smelled in this wonderful place--all pepper-minty and nice! and what a variety of trees there were--some big, big trees, just full of Chinese preserved ginger! and how Mun Chee did long to put her strong white teeth into some of it! Then there were trees so soft and white that they looked almost as if they were covered with snow; but it really was only white marsh-mallows. Then there were tiny Chinese fairies running all around, pulling bon-bons apart, and squealing with delight when they popped.

Then came Monkey-land, and this was the funniest of all, and even made a little Chinese girl laugh. Some of them were playing a game of base-ball with cocoanuts, and Mun Chee was all the time afraid one of them would get hit in the head; but they seemed to know just how to avoid that. Some of them ran up and asked her to stay to dinner with them, and then, when they thought she was not looking, they made such horrible faces at her that she was glad she had not accepted their invitation. After she had watched several games she hurried on again, looking back once, to see some of the monkeys throwing kisses at her and others making the ugliest faces. That might have been their way of being polite, though she really could not say, as she was not up in the etiquette of monkeys.

Next came the land of bears. There were all kinds,--black, brown, and white. She was scared at first, but the rabbit queen assured her they were harmless, and warranted not to hug. They were dancing some kind of a queer dance, and one silky white one, that looked just like a rug she

had at home, came and asked if the little celestial aristocrat would honor him with the next dance. A look from the eyes of Queen Bunny told her she had better accept, and she did so, smiling graciously upon the bear. Around they went, in a giddy whirl, her queue flying in the wind, until it seemed to Mun Chee that everything was going around with them, and she panted: "If it's just the same to you, I'd rather sit out the rest of this dance."

"Certainly, your highness," growled old bruin, and when she was seated he brought her a dish of sweetened snowballs, which were quite refreshing.

When she told them good-by this same bear could not resist the temptation of giving her just a teeny-weeny hug, but it didn't hurt, and she was quite sure he meant it as a mark of especial favor.

Next came the land of cats. Each land had its queen, and here it was Queen Malta, an immense maltese cat with large, yellow eyes. Such a purring as they made when they saw Mun Chee and Queen Bunny approaching! It was not often they were honored by royalty. The queen approached them, walking on her hind legs, her long silky tail held by a page,--a tiny white kitten, dressed in gauze and spangles.

"In what way shall it please your gracious majesties to be entertained?" said Queen Malta; but to any one else it would have sounded like "Miaouw--miaouw--miaouw--"

Mun Chee replied: "I likee some music."

Thereupon the queen tapped a silver bell, and there sprang lightly into view a perfect chorus of the most beautiful cats. After curtsying to the royal guests they began the music, and they sang the funniest songs imaginable. Mun Chee laughed till her little sides ached, but when she applauded, the noise scared away all the cats, and they scampered off, regardless of good manners. Queen Malta called them back, and explained matters, however, and the program was carried out without any further commotion. Mun Chee would like to have lingered for quite a while in each of these strange countries, but Queen Bunny told her it was approaching the hour when they were expected at the Easter castle, and so, after a few more swift turns through the air, they began to descend

softly, softly, until faint strains of music fell upon their ears.

It was a triumphant march of welcome, and the notes rose glad and high. Soon Mun Chee felt her feet touch the soft grass, and unclasping her arms from about the rabbit's neck, she stood and gazed about her in a perfect bewilderment of rapture. This was so different from any of the other countries; everywhere the eye rested upon the soft green tracery of leaves and trees, great beds of delicate fern, and flowers of every hue. Through an avenue of tall, waxen Easter lilies she was conducted by two tiny white rabbits, and as they walked, a glorious anthem sounded from all the great Easter lilies, and the golden clappers clanged musically against their satin whiteness.

All the while there was a strange and wonderful perfume filling the air, even sweeter than the scent of the punks burned before the joss in the temple. Some of the lilies bent down and kissed the dear little Chinese maiden as she passed, and their breath was sweeter than any perfume. After being royally entertained in the palace of pure white pearl the child was conducted into the queen's garden, where a feast was spread under the shade of some tall ferns. Being seated, they were served to delicious tea, in dainty cups, shaped like Easter lilies. Many good things were placed before the little girl, who was very hungry, after her long flight through the air, and nothing in her own home had ever tasted half so good as did these dishes served by the dear little white rabbits.

After much chatting and laughing the strange meal was ended, and the rabbit queen presented Mun Chee with a large basket of pearl and silver, lined with blue and yellow, the colors of the Imperial Court of China, and announced that they would now start out in search of Easter eggs. "Oh, what fun!" said Mun Chee, clapping her hands for joy. A white rabbit page went by her side, and carried her basket. Soon they came to a dense forest of fern, and Mun Chee heard a high, squeaky voice saying:

"Search for the one with long, long legs,
And you may find some Easter eggs."

"How queer!" thought Mun Chee, "to tell me about it. Well, if it has velly long legs I betteh quit looking on the glound, and look up." She did so, and away back among the ferns she saw some funny bright eyes

peeping at her.

“Why, it is a stork” (stork), she exclaimed.

With that the stork came forward, and extended a long claw in greeting, and, pointing to a large nest artfully concealed among the ferns, he said: “You may take what you see, and welcome.”

“Oh, thank you!” she said, and taking several of the very large eggs, placed them carefully in her basket.

“Oh, they won’t break,” said Queen Bunny. “The eggs in Easterland are warranted not to break.”

And now the soft trill of a canary rippled from a tree,--a tiny tree, that a child could easily reach. Sure enough, there was the dearest little canary, perched on a branch, singing sweetly,--

“Come and see! come and see,
What Canary has for thee.”

There in the little nest were a lot of the tiniest eggs, and all bright yellow, just the color of Mrs. Canary herself.

“Oh, you gentle little thing--you so good to give me youh cunning little eggs.”

“Don’t mention it!” said Canary.

Then a white dove cooed from its house near by,--

“Coo-coo, you are true,
Come and take my gift for you.”

Her gift was six eggs, pure white, with just the tiniest little pink polkadots in them. While she was admiring them she heard a gentle purr, which seemed to come from the ground under her feet, and looking down she saw peeping from a moss-lined hole in the ground a pair of pink eyes, and a white, soft paw, as the voice of this Easter rabbit purred,--

“Put your hand into the ground,
And find what no one else has found.”

“Well, I likee find what no one else has found,” she said; and putting her hand into the moss-lined nest, she drew out--not an egg, as she had expected, but six of the tiniest baby rabbits, no bigger than her thumb.

“Oh, you cunning little babies! You shall go and live with me,” said Mun Chee; and thanking the Easter rabbit, she passed on to the home of a blue-bird, on a swinging bough, and heard her singing,--

“Roses red, my eggs are blue,
Come! and I will give you two.”

What a beautiful blue they were, to be sure! just like the sky. Then a loud cackling fell upon her ear, and she could distinguish the words,--

“If you will give me a piece of bread
I'll bring you some eggs, all bright and red.”

She saw that the queer voice came from a bright red little hen, who gave her some beautiful eggs when she had given the bread.

Following the sound of a sharp voice she walked along the path until she came to a most beautiful peacock, gorgeous in the spread of its wonderful plumage.

This pleased her more than any of the others, because the peacock feather is sacred to the Chinese, and is used in their temples where they pray to the joss. The peacock's offering was a very large bunch of these brilliant feathers, to take to her _mo chun_, while it said in a queer, sharp voice,--

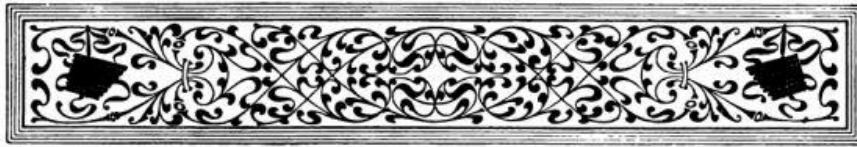
“It matters not, my little one, how stormy is the weather;
The joss will always care for those who have a peacock feather.”

“Now for the last place,” said Queen Bunny; and following the sound of a terrible screeching noise, they climbed a ladder into a tall tree, and there was a beautiful American eagle. It was not cross a bit, as eagles

usually are, but was singing,--

“The gift I have, little girl, for you
Is three big eggs--red, white, and blue.”

It seemed to Mun Chee that the best came last, for these were such beautiful eggs, and so different from any of the others. Her basket was quite full now, and as she saw the shade growing more dense beneath the trees she thought it must be quite time for her to return to her own home. So, after bidding good-by to all the royal company of white rabbits, and having her arms filled with the fragrant China lilies, she sprang upon the queen's back once more, and sped away--away--far from the Easter palace--the palace of a dream.



CARGO FOR CALLISTO

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Young Readers Science Fiction Stories*, by
Richard Mace Elam

The big rocket freighter was speeding through the star dust of outer space. It was carrying supplies to Callisto (one of the twelve moons of Jupiter) and the Shannons, on another space adventure.

Steve and Sue looked out a window of the freighter at the airless world growing in size. Callisto was a gigantic roughened rock, but it was a globe larger than the planet Mercury. It reminded Steve of a giant cockle-burr hanging in the sky.

Suddenly the children heard a tiny voice behind them say, “Rocket away!”

They turned and Sue exclaimed, “It’s Bud!”

The blue parakeet, a budgy, blinked lazily at them. The twins had met Mr. Whittle’s pet a week ago. He had taken a liking to them from the

very start. They didn't know that a few hours from now their very lives would depend on this little fellow.

"We'd better take him back to Mr. Whittle," Steve said.

The budgy kept studying them with his flat face and blinking his tiny button eyes. Then he squawked again, "Rocket away!"

"It'll be 'rocket away' for you, young fellow!" Steve said sternly. "Up on my finger, Bud!"

The bird did as he was ordered. They took him down the hall to Mr. Whittle's room. Bud's owner, off duty now, was a tall, spidery crewman with a big Adam's apple. He always gave his pet full run of the ship.

Mr. Whittle whistled to the parakeet, but the bird stayed on Steve's finger.

Mr. Whittle chuckled. "Hey, I believe he likes you two better than his master!"

"We like him, too," Sue told the crewman.

"You can keep him for a few days if you want to," Mr. Whittle said. "I'm going to be pretty busy after we land."

"Gee, we'd like to look after him!" Steve answered.

"If you take him outside on Callisto, you'll have to put him in that air-tight cage over there I had made. It's sort of like a space suit for him."

Sue and Steve played with Bud in the room they used for games until it was time to "strap down" for landing. Then they went to the couch hall and lay down on cots like the other space travelers were doing. They buckled straps across their bodies to keep them in place.

For a long time, Steve and Sue lay there as the big freighter began cutting its rushing speed. It felt to Steve as if a giant anvil were crushing downward on his chest. Take-off and landing were always the

roughest moments in space travel, as the twins had already found out on other space trips.

At last the ship set down on Callisto. The young Shannons went back to the game room. Then with the bird on Steve's shoulder, the twins looked out the window at the strange new world.

They saw a land bathed in ghostly twilight. Very little light was coming from the sun. It was so far away that it was only a small circle. Most of the light came from a huge shape that looked like somebody's lost beach ball resting on the ground. Its bottom edge just touched the horizon.

Sue and Steve were joined by their father, who worked for the space freight company.

"That's His Majesty, Jupiter—the king of planets," Mr. Shannon told them. "He's over a million miles away and yet he looks close enough to touch, doesn't he?"

"Let's go outdoors, Dad!" Steve begged.

"No reason why we can't," Mr. Shannon replied.

After they had put on their space clothes, Steve popped Bud into his warm, air-tight cage.

As they all went outside, they saw the crewmen unloading the cargo.

"There's the colony over there," Mr. Shannon said, pointing to a high framework that looked something like an oil derrick.

"They mine here for a mineral called magna. It's very valuable, because without it we couldn't have atomic engines. Magna is what keeps our rocket tubes from melting under the terrific heat that goes through them."

"May we go down into the mines, Dad?" Steve asked.

"We'll see if we can," said his father.

As they walked toward the mining place, Mr. Shannon said, "Underneath us are pockets of poisonous gas like that found in Jupiter's atmosphere. Sometimes it leaks into the mining tunnels causing danger from suffocation."

"I sure hope the gas stays where it belongs while we're down there!" Steve said and swallowed the lump of fear in his throat.

They turned their attention to Jupiter. It looked even more like a beach ball now with its stripes of beautiful colors. Mr. Shannon said the bands were floating ice bergs of the poisonous gases he was talking about.

"No ship can land on Jupiter," he said. "Its gravity would crush a spaceman flat. Gravity pull is much stronger on the larger planets, you know. Jupiter's atmosphere is many thousands of miles deep. Raging storms are going on beneath it all the time."

"Ooo!" Sue gasped. "I guess we're close enough to it then!"

Other wonders of the sky were the round beacons of Jupiter's other moons, three of which were about the same size as Callisto. They hung like bright searchlights in the starry heavens.

The men at the mining place greeted the Shannons warmly. They had not seen anyone from Earth for so long that they had grown very lonely.

The chief mining engineer said he would be glad to take the visitors on an underground tour. His name was Dr. Harding. He was plump and short and wore black-rimmed glasses inside his space helmet.

He led them into an elevator and it sank into the darkness. Steve remembered about the poisonous gases that crept about underground and it made him shiver to think about it.

Dr. Harding watched Bud hopping around uncomfortably inside his small space cage. "Do you remember, Mr. Shannon," he asked over his suit radio, "when they used to use canary birds in mines to warn about leaking gas? The birds would notice it first and give the miners time to

get out.”

“I’ve read about that, Dr. Harding,” said Mr. Shannon.

“Now we have automatic warning machines in the tunnels to do that,” the chief engineer told Sue and Steve.

Deeper and deeper below the soil of Callisto the elevator sank. At last the cage reached the bottom, and the riders found themselves in a large cavern. There were machines and men all about, working busily. Tracks led off into tunnels and ore cars were running on them. Some were going empty into the tunnels while others were coming out full of rock and gravel.

“The magna is separated from the rock in that big machine over there,” Dr. Harding explained. “Want to ride an ore car into one of the tunnels?”

“Sure!” Steve spoke up.

“The mine is air-conditioned,” the chief engineer said, “so we can take off our helmets.”

This done, Steve let Bud out of his cage. The little bird hopped up on his gloved finger, saying, “Rocket away!” several times. His two-word language seemed to do for everything.

One worker controlled all the cars at a main switch in the middle of the cavern. The Shannons and their guide climbed into an empty ore car and it rolled into a tunnel.

Glistening dark rock crowded in on Sue and Steve from all sides. Steve hoped the walls were strong enough so they would not come crashing down on their heads! There were lights along the way to help brighten the gloom.

After clicking along like a trolley for awhile, the car came to the end of the line. It was a large room with more machines and workmen. The men were digging magna ore out of the wall with drills.

As Dr. Harding explained about the work, Bud began flitting about as though sight-seeing on his own. He was shy of the workers at first, but then made friends with them. He spoke to them with his favorite two words and the men laughed in great fun to hear him.

Then a few minutes later, Bud began acting queerly. He flew back to Steve's finger and started wobbling as though dizzy.

"What's the matter with him?" Steve asked.

"He's sick or something!" Sue cried out. She took the budgy from Steve and cuddled him in her own gloves. But the little blue bird seemed to be no better.

Dr. Harding walked over to look at the bird. Then he ordered, "Everybody into the ore car! We have to get out of here fast! Sue, hold the bird up close to your suit!"

The workers dropped their tools as if they were red hot and climbed into the car. Mr. Shannon helped Sue and Steve on, then jumped on himself.

Dr. Harding pressed the electric button that was the signal to the operator in the main cavern to move the car. The car began to roll down the track. It picked up speed as Dr. Harding kept pressing the button.

"Leaking gas, Dr. Harding?" Mr. Shannon asked worriedly.

The chief engineer nodded. He sniffed the air like a hunting dog after a scent. "Take a deep breath, everyone, then hold it!"

Steve thought his lungs would burst, but finally Dr. Harding let them take another deep breath. By the time they had taken one more, the car had reached the main cavern. As it rolled to a stop, Dr. Harding jumped down and ran over to the car operator.

Steve saw a door slide down and close off the tunnel where they had come out. Then the little man gave a deep sigh and took off his black-rimmed glasses to wipe them.

Sue and Steve watched Bud hopefully. He was standing more steadily on

Sue's finger now.

"I think he'll be all right," the chief engineer said. "We sure owe Bud a lot for warning us the way he did. Something must have happened to the warning machine. It was supposed to set off a siren."

"If it weren't for Bud we might have been overcome before we could have gotten out of there!" Mr. Shannon added.

"You're so right!" Dr. Harding said. "The men will go back in there in gas masks to find the leak and see what's wrong with the warning machine."

"We're plenty lucky!" Steve sighed, his spine still prickly from their narrow escape.

Sue kissed the budgy. "You're a hero, Bud," she told him, "and we love you!"

Bud blinked lazily. Then as if to show that he was all right again, he squawked, "Rocket away!"



HÁBOGI

[_Neuisländischen Volksmärchen._]

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Brown Fairy Book*, by Andrew Lang

Once upon a time there lived two peasants who had three daughters, and, as generally happens, the youngest was the most beautiful and the best tempered, and when her sisters wanted to go out she was always ready to stay at home and do their work.

Years passed quickly with the whole family, and one day the parents

suddenly perceived that all three girls were grown up, and that very soon they would be thinking of marriage.

'Have you decided what your husband's name is to be?' said the father, laughingly, to his eldest daughter, one evening when they were all sitting at the door of their cottage. 'You know that is a very important point!'

'Yes; I will never wed any man who is not called Sigmund,' answered she.

'Well, it is lucky for you that there are a great many Sigmunds in this part of the world,' replied her father, 'so that you can take your choice! And what do you say?' he added, turning to the second.

'Oh, I think that there is no name so beautiful as Sigurd,' cried she.

'Then you won't be an old maid either,' answered he. 'There are seven Sigurds in the next village alone! And you, Helga?'

Helga, who was still the prettiest of the three, looked up. She also had her favourite name, but, just as she was going to say it, she seemed to hear a voice whisper: 'Marry no one who is not called Hábogi.'

The girl had never heard of such a name, and did not like it, so she determined to pay no attention; but as she opened her mouth to tell her father that her husband must be called Njal, she found herself answering instead: 'If I do marry it will be to no one except Hábogi.'

'Who is Hábogi?' asked her father and sisters; 'We never heard of such a person.'

'All I can tell you is that he will be my husband, if ever I have one,' returned Helga; and that was all she would say.

Before very long the young men who lived in the neighbouring villages or on the sides of the mountains, had heard of this talk of the three girls, and Sigmunds and Sigurds in scores came to visit the little

cottage. There were other young men too, who bore different names, though not one of them was called 'Hábogi,' and these thought that they might perhaps gain the heart of the youngest. But though there was more than one 'Njal' amongst them, Helga's eyes seemed always turned another way.

At length the two elder sisters made their choice from out of the Sigurds and the Sigmunds, and it was decided that both weddings should take place at the same time. Invitations were sent out to the friends and relations, and when, on the morning of the great day, they were all assembled, a rough, coarse old peasant left the crowd and came up to the brides' father.

'My name is Hábogi, and Helga must be my wife,' was all he said. And though Helga stood pale and trembling with surprise, she did not try to run away.

'I cannot talk of such things just now,' answered the father, who could not bear the thought of giving his favourite daughter to this horrible old man, and hoped, by putting it off, that something might happen. But the sisters, who had always been rather jealous of Helga, were secretly pleased that their bridegrooms should outshine hers.

When the feast was over, Hábogi led up a beautiful horse from a field where he had left it to graze, and bade Helga jump up on its splendid saddle, all embroidered in scarlet and gold. 'You shall come back again,' said he; 'but now you must see the house that you are to live in.' And though Helga was very unwilling to go, something inside her forced her to obey.

The old man settled her comfortably, then sprang up in front of her as easily as if he had been a boy, and, shaking the reins, they were soon out of sight.

After some miles they rode through a meadow, with grass so green that Helga's eyes felt quite dazzled; and feeding on the grass were a quantity of large fat sheep, with the curliest and whitest wool in the world.

'What lovely sheep! whose are they?' cried Helga.

'Your Hábogi's,' answered he, 'all that you see belongs to him; but the finest sheep in the whole herd, which has little golden bells hanging between its horns, you shall have for yourself.'

This pleased Helga very much, for she had never had anything of her own; and she smiled quite happily as she thanked Hábogi for his present.

They soon left the sheep behind them, and entered a large field with a river running through it, where a number of beautiful grey cows were standing by a gate waiting for a milk-maid to come and milk them.

'Oh, what lovely cows!' cried Helga again; 'I am sure their milk must be sweeter than any other cows'. How I should like to have some! I wonder to whom they belong?'

'To your Hábogi,' replied he; 'and some day you shall have as much milk as you like, but we cannot stop now. Do you see that big grey one, with the silver bells between her horns? That is to be yours, and you can have her milked every morning the moment you wake.'

And Helga's eyes shone, and though she did not say anything, she thought that she would learn to milk the cow herself.

A mile further on they came to a wide common, with short, springy turf, where horses of all colours, with skins of satin, were kicking up their heels in play. The sight of them so delighted Helga that she nearly sprang from her saddle with a shriek of joy.

'Whose are they? Oh! whose are they?' she asked. 'How happy any man must be who is the master of such lovely creatures!'

'They are your Hábogi's,' replied he, 'and the one which you think the most beautiful of all you shall have for yourself, and learn to ride him.'

At this Helga quite forgot the sheep and the cow.

'A horse of my own!' said she. 'Oh, stop one moment, and let me see

which I will choose. The white one? No. The chestnut? No. I think, after all, I like the coal-black one best, with the little white star on his forehead. Oh, do stop, just for a minute.'

But Hábogi would not stop or listen. 'When you are married you will have plenty of time to choose one,' was all he answered, and they rode on two or three miles further.

At length Hábogi drew rein before a small house, very ugly and mean-looking, and that seemed on the point of tumbling to pieces.

'This is my house, and is to be yours,' said Hábogi, as he jumped down and held out his arms to lift Helga from the horse. The girl's heart sank a little, as she thought that the man who possessed such wonderful sheep, and cows, and horses, might have built himself a prettier place to live in; but she did not say so. And, taking her arm, he led her up the steps.

But when she got inside, she stood quite bewildered at the beauty of all around her. None of her friends owned such things, not even the miller, who was the richest man she knew. There were carpets everywhere, thick and soft, and of deep rich colours; and the cushions were of silk, and made you sleepy even to look at them; and curious little figures in china were scattered about. Helga felt as if it would take her all her life to see everything properly, and it only seemed a second since she had entered the house, when Hábogi came up to her.

'I must begin the preparations for our wedding at once,' he said; 'but my foster-brother will take you home, as I promised. In three days he will bring you back here, with your parents and sisters, and any guests you may invite, in your company. By that time the feast will be ready.'

Helga had so much to think about, that the ride home appeared very short. Her father and mother were delighted to see her, as they did not feel sure that so ugly and cross-looking a man as Hábogi might not have played her some cruel trick. And after they had given her some supper they begged her to tell them all she had done. But Helga only told them that they should see for themselves on the third day, when

they would come to her wedding.

It was very early in the morning when the party set out, and Helga's two sisters grew green with envy as they passed the flocks of sheep, and cows, and horses, and heard that the best of each was given to Helga herself; but when they caught sight of the poor little house which was to be her home their hearts grew light again.

'I should be ashamed of living in such a place,' whispered each to the other; and the eldest sister spoke of the carved stone over her doorway, and the second boasted of the number of rooms she had. But the moment they went inside they were struck dumb with rage at the splendour of everything, and their faces grew white and cold with fury when they saw the dress which Hábogi had prepared for his bride--a dress that glittered like sunbeams dancing upon ice.

'She shall not look so much finer than us,' they cried passionately to each other as soon as they were alone; and when night came they stole out of their rooms, and taking out the wedding-dress, they laid it in the ash-pit, and heaped ashes upon it. But Hábogi, who knew a little magic, and had guessed what they would do, changed the ashes into roses, and cast a spell over the sisters, so that they could not leave the spot for a whole day, and every one who passed by mocked at them.

The next morning when they all awoke the ugly little tumble-down house had disappeared, and in its place stood a splendid palace. The guests' eyes sought in vain for the bridegroom, but could only see a handsome young man, with a coat of blue velvet and silver and a gold crown upon his head.

'Who is that?' they asked Helga.

'That is my Hábogi,' said she.



THE GOOD FERRYMAN AND THE WATER NYMPHS

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Polish Fairy Tales*, by A. J. Glinski

There was once an old man, very poor, with three sons. They lived chiefly by ferrying people over a river; but he had had nothing but ill-luck all his life. And to crown all, on the night he died, there was a great storm, and in it the crazy old ferry-boat, on which his sons depended for a living, was sunk.

As they were lamenting both their father and their poverty, an old man came by, and learning the reason of their sorrow said:

"Never mind; all will come right in time. Look! there is your boat as good as new."

And there was a fine new ferry-boat on the water, in place of the old one, and a number of people waiting to be ferried over.

The three brothers arranged to take turns with the boat, and divide the fares they took.

They were however very different in disposition. The two elder brothers were greedy and avaricious, and would never take anyone over the river, without being handsomely paid for it.

But the youngest brother took over poor people, who had no money, for nothing; and moreover frequently relieved their wants out of his own pocket.

One day, at sunset, when the eldest brother was at the ferry the same old man, who had visited them on the night their father died, came, and asked for a passage.

"I have nothing to pay you with, but this empty purse," he said.

"Go and get something to put in it then first," replied the ferry-man; "and be off with you now!"

Next day it was the second brother's turn; and the same old man came, and offered his empty purse as his fare. But he met with a like reply.

The third day it was the youngest brother's turn; and when the old man arrived, and asked to be ferried over for charity, he answered:

"Yes, get in, old man."

"And what is the fare?" asked the old man.

"That depends upon whether you can pay or not," was the reply; "but if you cannot, it is all the same to me."

"A good deed is never without its reward," said the old man: "but in the meantime take this empty purse; though it is very worn, and looks worth nothing. But if you shake it, and say:

'For his sake who gave it, this purse I hold,
I wish may always be full of gold;'

it will always afford you as much gold as you wish for."

The youngest brother came home, and his brothers, who were sitting over a good supper, laughed at him, because he had taken only a few copper coins that day, and they told him he should have no supper. But when he began to shake his purse and scatter gold coins all about, they jumped up from the table, and began picking them up eagerly.

And as it was share and share alike, they all grew rich very quickly. The youngest brother made good use of his riches, for he gave away money freely to the poor. But the greedy elder brothers envied him the possession of the wonderful purse, and contrived to steal it from him. Then they left their old home; and the one bought a ship, laded it with all sorts of merchandize, for a trading voyage. But the ship ran upon a rock, and every one on board was drowned. The second brother was no more fortunate, for as he was travelling through a forest, with an enormous treasure of precious stones, in which he had laid out his wealth, to sell at a profit, he was waylaid by robbers, who murdered him, and shared the spoil among them.

The youngest brother, who remained at home, having lost his purse, became as poor as before. But he still did as formerly, took pay from passengers who could afford it, ferried over poor folks for nothing, and helped those who were poorer than himself so far as he could.

One day the same old man with the long white beard came by; the ferry-man welcomed him as an old friend, and while rowing him over the river, told him all that had happened since he last saw him.

"Your brothers did very wrong, and they have paid for it," said the old man; "but you were in fault yourself. Still, I will give you one more chance. Take this hook and line; and whatever you catch, mind you hold fast, and not let it escape you; or you will bitterly repent it."

The old man then disappeared, and the ferry-man looked in wonder at his new fishing-tackle--a diamond hook, a silver line, and a golden rod.

All at once the hook sprang of itself into the water; the line lengthened out along the river current, and there came a strong pull upon it. The fisherman drew it in, and beheld a most lovely creature, upwards from the waist a woman, but with a fish's tail.

"Good ferry-man, let me go," she said; "take your hook out of my hair! The sun is setting, and after sunset I can no longer be a water-nymph again."

But without answering, the ferry-man only held her fast, and covered her over with his coat, to prevent her escaping. Then the sun set, and she lost her fish-tail.

"Now," she said: "I am yours; so let us go to the nearest church and get married."

She was already dressed as a bride, with a myrtle garland on her head, in a white dress, with a rainbow-coloured girdle, and rich jewels in her hair and on her neck. And she held in her hand the wonderful purse, that was always full of gold.

They found the priest and all ready at the church; were married in a few

minutes; and then came home to their wedding-feast, to which all the neighbours were invited. They were royally entertained, and when they were about to leave the bride shook the wonderful purse, and sent a shower of gold pieces flying among the guests; so they all went home very well pleased.

The good ferry-man and his marvellous wife lived most happily together; they never wanted for anything, and gave freely to all who came. He continued to ply his ferry-boat; but he now took all passengers over for nothing, and gave them each a piece of gold into the bargain.

Now there was a king over that country, who a year ago had just succeeded to his elder brother. He had heard of the ferry-man, who was so marvellously rich, and wishing to ascertain the truth of the story he had heard, came on purpose to see for himself. But when he saw the ferry-man's beautiful young wife, he resolved to have her for himself, and determined to get rid of her husband somehow.

At that time there was an eclipse of the sun; and the king sent for the ferry-man, and told him he must find out the cause of this eclipse, or be put to death.

He came home in great distress to his wife; but she replied:

"Never mind, my dear. I will tell you what to do, and how to gratify the king's curiosity."

So she gave him a wonderful ball of thread, which he was to throw before him, and follow the thread as it kept unwinding-towards the East.

He went on a long way, over high mountains, deep rivers, and wide regions. At last he came to a ruined city, where a number of corpses were lying about unburied, tainting the air with pestilence.

The good man was sorry to see this, and took the pains to summon men from the neighbouring cities, and get the bodies properly buried. He then resumed his journey.

He came at last to the ends of the earth. Here he found a magnificent golden palace, with an amber roof, and diamond doors and windows.

The ball of thread went straight into the palace, and the ferry-man found himself in a vast apartment, where sat a very dignified old lady, spinning from a golden distaff.

"Wretched man! what are you here for?" she exclaimed, when she saw him. "My son will come back presently and burn you up."

He explained to her how he had been forced to come, out of sheer necessity.

"Well, I must help you," replied the old lady, who was no less than the Mother of the Sun, "because you did Sol that good turn some days ago, in burying the inhabitants of that town, when they were killed by a dragon. He journeys every day across the wide arch of heaven, in a diamond car, drawn by twelve grey horses, with golden manes, giving heat and light to the whole world. He will soon be back here, to rest for the night.... But ... here he comes; hide yourself, and take care to observe what follows."

So saying she changed her visitor into a lady-bird, and let him fly to the window.

Then the neighing of the wonderful horses and the rattling of chariot wheels were heard, and the bright Sun himself presently came in, and stretching himself upon a coral bed, remarked to his mother:

"I smell a human being here!"

"What nonsense you talk!" replied his mother. "How could any human being come here? You know it is impossible."

The Sun, as if he did not quite believe her, began to peer anxiously about the room.

"Don't be so restless," said the old lady; "but tell me why you suffered eclipse a month or two ago."

"How could I help it?" answered the Sun; "When the dragon from the deep abyss attacked me, and I had to fight him? Perhaps I should have been

fighting with the monster till now, if a wonderful mermaid had not come to help me. When she began to sing, and looked at the dragon with her beautiful eyes, all his rage softened at once; he was absorbed in gazing upon her beauty, and I meanwhile burnt him to ashes, and threw them into the sea."

The Sun then went to sleep, and his mother again touched the ferry-man with her spindle; he then returned to his natural shape, and slipped out of the palace. Following the ball of thread he reached home at last, and next day went to the king, and told him all.

But the king was so enchanted at the description of the beautiful sea-maiden, that he ordered the ferry-man to go and bring her to him, on pain of death.

He went home very sad to his wife, but she told him she would manage this also. So saying she gave him another ball of thread, to show him which way to go, and she also gave him a carriage-load of costly lady's apparel and jewels, and ornaments--told him what he was to do, and they took leave of one another.

On the way the ferry-man met a youth, riding on a fine grey horse, who asked:

"What have you got there, man?"

"A woman's wearing apparel, most costly and beautiful"--he had several dresses, not simply one.

"I say, give me some of those as a present for my intended, whom I am going to see. I can be of use to you, for I am the Storm-wind. I will come, whenever you call upon me thus:

'Storm-wind! Storm-wind! come with speed!
Help me in my sudden need!'"

The ferry-man gave him some of the most beautiful things he had, and the Storm-wind passed.

A little further on he met an old man, grey-haired, but strong and

vigorous-looking, who also said:

"What have you got there?"

"Women's garments costly and beautiful."

"I am going to my daughter's wedding; she is to marry the Storm-wind; give me something as a wedding present for her, and I will be of use to you. I am the Frost; if you need me call upon me thus:

'Frost, I call thee; come with speed;
Help me in my sudden need!'"

The ferry-man let him take all he wanted and went on.

And now he came to the sea-coast; here the ball of thread stopped, and would go no further.

The ferry-man waded up to his waist into the sea, and set up two high poles, with cross-bars between them, upon which he hung dresses of various colours, scarves, and ribbons, gold chains, and diamond earrings and pins, shoes, and looking-glasses, and then hid himself, with his wonderful hook and line ready.

As soon as the morning rose from the sea, there appeared far away on the smooth waters a silvery boat, in which stood a beautiful maiden, with a golden oar in one hand, while with the other she gathered together her long golden hair, all the while singing so beautifully to the rising sun, that, if the ferry-man had not quickly stopped his ears, he would have fallen into a delicious reverie, and then asleep.

She sailed along a long time in her silver boat, and round her leaped and played golden fishes with rainbow wings and diamond eyes. But all at once she perceived the rich clothes and ornaments, hung up on the poles, and as she came nearer, the ferry-man called out:

"Storm-wind! Storm-wind! come with speed!
Help me in my sudden need!"

"What do you want?" asked the Storm-wind.

The ferry-man without answering him, called out:

"Frost, I call thee; come with speed,
Help me in my sudden need!"

"What do you want?" asked the Frost.

"I want to capture the sea-maiden."

Then the wind blew and blew, so that the silver boat was capsized,
and the frost breathed on the sea till it was frozen over.

Then the ferryman rushed up to the sea-maiden, entangling his hook in
her golden hair; lifted her on his horse, and rode off as swift as the
wind after his wonderful ball of thread.

She kept weeping and lamenting all the way; but as soon as they reached
the ferry-man's home, and saw his wife, all her sorrow changed into joy;
she laughed with delight, and threw herself into her arms.

And then it turned out that the two were sisters.

Next morning the ferry-man went to court with both his wife and
sister-in-law, and the king was so delighted with the beauty of the
latter, that he at once offered to marry her. But she could give him no
answer until he had the Self-playing Guitar.

So the king ordered the ferry-man to procure him this wonderful guitar,
or be put to death.

His wife told him what to do, and gave him a handkerchief of hers,
embroidered with gold, telling him to use this in case of need.

Following the ball of thread he came at last to a great lake, in the
midst of which was a green island.

He began to wonder how he was to get there, when he saw a boat
approaching, in which was an old man, with a long white beard, and he
recognized him with delight, as his former benefactor.

"How are you, ferry-man?" he asked. "Where are you going?"

"I am going wherever the ball of thread leads me, for I must fetch the Self-playing Guitar."

"This guitar," said the old man, "belongs to Goldmore, the lord of that island. It is a difficult matter to have to do with him; but perhaps you may succeed. You have often ferried me over the water; I will ferry you now."

The old man pushed off, and they reached the island.

On arriving the ball of thread went straight into a palace, where Goldmore came out to meet the traveller, and asked him where he was going and what he wanted.

He explained:

"I am come for the Self-playing Guitar."

"I will only let you have it on condition that you do not go to sleep for three days and nights. And if you do, you will not only lose all chance of the Self-playing Guitar; but you must die."

What could the poor man do, but agree to this?

So Goldmore conducted him to a great room, and locked him in. The floor was strewn with sleepy-grass, so he fell asleep directly.

Next morning in came Goldmore, and on waking him up said:

"So you went to sleep! Very well, you shall die!"

And he touched a spring in the floor, and the unhappy ferry-man fell down into an apartment beneath, where the walls were of looking-glass, and there were great heaps of gold and precious stones lying about.

For three days and nights he lay there; he was fearfully hungry. And then it dawned upon him that he was to be starved to death!

He called out, and entreated in vain; nobody answered, and though he had piles of gold and jewels about him, they could not purchase him a morsel of food.

He sought in vain for any means of exit. There was a window, of clearest crystal, but it was barred by a heavy iron grating. But the window looked into a garden whence he could hear nightingales singing, doves cooing, and the murmur of a brook. But inside he saw only heaps of useless gold and jewels, and his own face, worn and haggard, reflected a thousand times.

He could now only pray for a speedy death, and took out a little iron cross, which he had kept by him since his boyhood. But in doing so he also drew out the gold-embroidered handkerchief, given him by his wife, and which he had quite forgotten till now.

Goldmore had been looking on, as he often did, from an opening in the ceiling to enjoy the sight of his prisoner's sufferings. All at once he recognized the handkerchief, as belonging to his own sister, the ferry-man's wife.

He at once changed his treatment of his brother-in-law, as he had discovered him to be; took him out of prison, led him to his own apartments, gave him food and drink, and the Self-playing Guitar into the bargain.

Coming home, the ferry-man met his wife half-way.

"The ball of thread came home alone," she explained; "so I judged that some misfortune had befallen you, and I was coming to help you."

He told her all his adventures, and they returned home together.

The king was all eagerness to see and hear the Self-playing Guitar; so he ordered the ferry-man, his wife, and her sister to come with it to the palace at once.

Now the property of this Self-playing Guitar was such that wherever its music was heard, the sick became well, those who were sad merry, ugly

folks became handsome, sorceries were dissolved, and those who had been murdered rose from the dead, and slew their murderers.

So when the king, having been told the charm to set the guitar playing, said the words, all the court began to be merry, and dance--except the king himself!... For all at once the door opened, the music ceased, and the figure of the late king stood up in his shroud, and said:

"I was the rightful possessor of the throne! and you, wicked brother, who caused me to be murdered, shall now reap your reward!"

So saying he breathed upon him, and the king fell dead--on which the phantom vanished.

But as soon as they recovered from their fright, all the nobility who were present acclaimed the ferry-man as their king.

The next day, after the burial of the late king, the beautiful sea-maiden, the beloved of the Sun, went back to the sea, to float about in her silvery canoe, in the company of the rainbow fishes, and to rejoice in the sunbeams.

But the good ferry-man and his wife lived happily ever after, as king and queen. And they gave a grand ball to the nobility and to the people.... The Self-playing Guitar furnished the music, the wonderful purse scattered gold all the time, and the king entertained all the guests right royally.



THE FLAX.

by Hans Christian Andersen.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Third Reader*, by Various

The flax was in full bloom; it had pretty little blue flowers as delicate as the wings of a moth, or even more so. The sun shone, and

the showers watered it; and this was just as good for the flax as it is for little children to be washed and then kissed by their mother. They look much prettier for it, and so did the flax.

“People say that I look exceedingly well,” said the flax, “and that I am so fine and long, that I shall make a beautiful piece of linen. How fortunate I am! it makes me so happy; it is such a pleasant thing to know that something can be made of me. How the sunshine cheers me, and how sweet and refreshing is the rain! my happiness overpowers me; no one in the world can feel happier than I do.”

One day some people came, who took hold of the flax and pulled it up by the roots; this was painful. Then it was laid in water as if they intended to drown it; and, after that, placed near a fire as if it were to be roasted; all this was very shocking.

“We cannot expect to be happy always,” said the flax; “by experiencing evil as well as good we become wise.” And certainly there was plenty of evil in store for the flax. It was steeped, and roasted, and broken, and combed; indeed, it scarcely knew what was done to it.

At last it was put on the spinning-wheel. “Whirr, whirr,” went the wheel so quickly that the flax could not collect its thoughts.

“Well, I have been very happy,” he thought in the midst of his pain, “and must be contented with the past;” and contented he remained till he was put on the loom, and became a beautiful piece of white linen. All the flax, even to the last stalk, was used in making this one piece. “How wonderful it is that, after all I have suffered, I am made something of at last; I am the luckiest person in the world—so strong and fine; and how white, and what a length! This is something different from being a mere plant and bearing flowers. Then I had no attention, nor any water unless it rained. Now I am watched and taken care of. Every morning the maid turns me over, and I have a shower-bath from the watering-pot every evening. Yes, and the clergyman’s wife noticed me, and said I was the best piece of linen in the whole parish. I cannot be happier than I am now.”

After some time, the linen was taken into the house, placed under the scissors, and cut and torn into pieces, and then pricked with needles.

This certainly was not pleasant; but at last it was made into garments.

“See, now, then,” said the flax, “I have become something of importance. This was my destiny; it is quite a blessing. Now I shall be of some use in the world, as every one ought to be; it is the only way to be happy.”

Years passed away; and at last the linen was so worn it could scarcely hold together.

“It must end very soon,” said the pieces to each other. “We would gladly have held together a little longer, but it is useless to expect impossibilities.”

And at length they fell into rags and tatters, and thought it was all over with them, for they were torn to shreds, and steeped in water, and made into a pulp, and dried, and they knew not what besides, till all at once they found themselves beautiful white paper.

“Well, now, this is a surprise; a glorious surprise too,” said the paper. “I am now finer than ever, and I shall be written upon, and who can tell what fine things I may have written upon me? This is wonderful luck!”

And sure enough, the most beautiful stories and poetry were written upon it, and only once was there a blot, which was very fortunate.

Then people heard the stories and poetry read, and it made them wiser and better; for all that was written had a good and sensible meaning, and a great blessing was contained in the words on the paper.

“I never imagined anything like this,” said the paper, “when I was only a little blue flower, growing in the fields. How could I fancy that I should ever be the means of bringing knowledge and joy to men? I cannot understand it myself, and yet it is really so. Heaven knows that I have done nothing myself, but what I was obliged to do with my weak powers for my own preservation; and yet I have been promoted from one joy and honor to another. Each time I think that the song is ended; and then something higher and better begins for me. I suppose now I shall be sent on my travels about the world, so that people may read me. It

cannot be otherwise; indeed it is more than probable; for I have more splendid thoughts written upon me than I had pretty flowers in olden times. I am happier than ever.”

But the paper did not go on its travels. It was sent to the printer, and all the words written upon it were set up in type, to make a book, or rather hundreds of books; for so many more persons could derive pleasure and profit from a printed book than from the written paper; and if the paper had been sent about the world, it would have been worn out before it had got half through its journey.

“This is certainly the wisest plan,” said the written paper; “I really did not think of that. I shall remain at home and be held in honor, like some old grandfather, as I really am to all these new books. They will do some good. I could not have wandered about as they do. Yet he who wrote all this has looked at me as every word flowed from his pen upon my surface. I am the most honored of all.”

Then the paper was tied in a bundle with other papers, and thrown into a tub that stood in the washhouse.

“After work, it is well to rest,” said the paper, “and a very good opportunity this is to collect one’s thoughts. Now I am able, for the first time, to think of my real condition; and to know one’s self is true progress. What will be done with me now I wonder? No doubt I shall still go forward.”

Now it happened one day that all the paper in the tub was taken out, and laid on the hearth to be burnt. People said it could not be sold at the shop, to wrap up butter and sugar, because it had been written upon. The children in the house stood round the stove; for they wanted to see the paper burn, because it flamed up so prettily, and afterwards, among the ashes, so many red sparks could be seen running one after the other, here and there, as quick as the wind. They called it “seeing the children come out of school,” and the last spark was the schoolmaster. They often thought the last spark had come; and one would cry, “There goes the schoolmaster;” but the next moment another spark would appear, shining so beautifully. How they would like to know where the sparks all went to! Perhaps we shall find out some day, but we don’t know now.

The whole bundle of paper had been placed on the fire, and was soon alight. "Ugh!" cried the paper, as it burst into a bright flame; "ugh!" It was certainly not very pleasant to be burning; but when the whole was wrapped in flames, the flames mounted up into the air, higher than the flax had ever been able to raise its little blue flower; and they glistened as the white linen never could have glistened. All the written letters became quite red in a moment, and all the words and thoughts turned into fire.

"Now I am mounting straight up to the sun," said a voice in the flames; and it was as if a thousand voices echoed the words; and the flames darted up through the chimney, and went out at the top. Then a number of tiny beings, as many in number as the flowers on the flax had been, and invisible to mortal eyes, floated above them. They were even lighter and more delicate than the flowers from which they were born; and as the flames were extinguished, and nothing remained of the paper but black ashes, these little things danced upon it; and whenever they touched it, bright red sparks appeared.



THE ALLIGATOR WAR

Project Gutenberg's *South American Jungle Tales*, by Horacio Quiroga

It was a very big river in a region of South America that had never been visited by white men; and in it lived many, many alligators--perhaps a hundred, perhaps a thousand. For dinner they ate fish, which they caught in the stream, and for supper they ate deer and other animals that came down to the water side to drink. On hot afternoons in summer they stretched out and sunned themselves on the bank. But they liked nights when the moon was shining best of all. Then they swam out into the river and sported and played, lashing the water to foam with their tails, while the spray ran off their beautiful skins in all the colors of the rainbow.

These alligators had lived quite happy lives for a long, long time. But at last one afternoon, when they were all sleeping on the sand, snoring and snoring, one alligator woke up and cocked his ears--the way alligators cock their ears. He listened and listened, and, to be sure, faintly, and from a great distance, came a sound: _Chug!_ _Chug!_ _Chug!_

"Hey!" the alligator called to the alligator sleeping next to him, "Hey! Wake up! Danger!"

"Danger of what?" asked the other, opening his eyes sleepily, and getting up.

"I don't know!" replied the first alligator.

"That's a noise I never heard before. Listen!"

The other alligator listened: _Chug!_ _Chug!_ _Chug!_

In great alarm the two alligators went calling up and down the river bank: "Danger! Danger!" And all their sisters and brothers and mothers and fathers and uncles and aunts woke up and began running this way and that with their tails curled up in the air. But the excitement did not serve to calm their fears. _Chug!_ _Chug!_ _Chug!_ The noise was growing louder every moment; and at last, away off down the stream, they could see something moving along the surface of the river, leaving a trail of gray smoke behind it and beating the water on either side to foam: _Chush!_ _Chush!_ _Chush!_

The alligators looked at each other in the greatest astonishment: "What on earth is that?"

But there was one old alligator, the wisest and most experienced of them all. He was so old that only two sound teeth were left in his jaws--one in the upper jaw and one in the lower jaw. Once, also, when he was a boy, fond of adventure, he had made a trip down the river all the way to the sea.

"I know what it is," said he. "It's a whale. Whales are big fish, they

shoot water up through their noses, and it falls down on them behind."

At this news, the little alligators began to scream at the top of their lungs, "It's a whale! It's a whale! It's a whale!" and they made for the water intending to duck out of sight.

But the big alligator cuffed with his tail a little alligator that was screaming nearby with his mouth open wide. "Dry up!" said he. "There's nothing to be afraid of! I know all about whales! Whales are the fraidest people there are!" And the little alligators stopped their noise.

But they grew frightened again a moment afterwards. The gray smoke suddenly turned to an inky black, and the _Chush!_ _Chush!_ _Chush!_ was now so loud that all the alligators took to the water, with only their eyes and the tips of their noses showing at the surface.

Cho-ash-h-h! _Cho-ash-h-h!_ _Cho-ash-h-h!_ The strange monster came rapidly up the stream. The alligators saw it go crashing past them, belching great clouds of smoke from the middle of its back, and splashing into the water heavily with the big revolving things it had on either side.

It was a steamer, the first steamer that had ever made its way up the Parana. _Chush!_ _Chush!_ _Chush!_ It seemed to be getting further away again. _Chug!_ _Chug!_ _Chug!_ It had disappeared from view.

One by one, the alligators climbed up out of the water onto the bank again. They were all quite cross with the old alligator who had told them wrongly that it was a whale.

"It was not a whale!" they shouted in his ear--for he was rather hard of hearing. "Well, what was it that just went by?"

The old alligator then explained that it was a steamboat full of fire; and that the alligators would all die if the boat continued to go up and down the river.

The other alligators only laughed, however. Why would the alligators die if the boat kept going up and down the river? It had passed by without

so much as speaking to them! That old alligator didn't really know so much as he pretended to! And since they were very hungry they all went fishing in the stream. But alas! There was not a fish to be found! The steamboat had frightened every single one of them away.

"Well, what did I tell you?" said the old alligator. "You see: we haven't anything left to eat! All the fish have been frightened away! However--let's just wait till tomorrow. Perhaps the boat won't come back again. In that case, the fish will get over their fright and come back so that we can eat them." But the next day, the steamboat came crashing by again on its way back down the river, spouting black smoke as it had done before, and setting the whole river boiling with its paddle wheels.

"Well!" exclaimed the alligators. "What do you think of that? The boat came yesterday. The boat came today. The boat will come tomorrow. The fish will stay away; and nothing will come down here at night to drink. We are done for!"

But an idea occurred to one of the brighter alligators: "Let's dam the river!" he proposed. "The steamboat won't be able to climb a dam!"

"That's the talk! That's the talk! A dam! A dam! Let's build a dam!" And the alligators all made for the shore as fast as they could.

They went up into the woods along the bank and began to cut down trees of the hardest wood they could find--walnut and mahogany, mostly. They felled more than ten thousand of them altogether, sawing the trunks through with the kind of saw that alligators have on the tops of their tails. They dragged the trees down into the water and stood them up about a yard apart, all the way across the river, driving the pointed ends deep into the mud and weaving the branches together. No steamboat, big or little, would ever be able to pass that dam! No one would frighten the fish away again! They would have a good dinner the following day and every day! And since it was late at night by the time the dam was done, they all fell sound asleep on the river bank.

Chug! _Chug!_ _Chug!_ _Chush!_ _Chush!_ _Chush!_ _Cho-ash-h-h-h!_ _Cho-ash-h-h-h!_ _Cho-ash-h-h-h!_

They were still asleep, the next day, when the boat came up; but the

alligators barely opened their eyes and then tried to go to sleep again. What did they care about the boat? It could make all the noise it wanted, but it would never get by the dam!

And that is what happened. Soon the noise from the boat stopped. The men who were steering on the bridge took out their spy-glasses and began to study the strange obstruction that had been thrown up across the river. Finally a small boat was sent to look into it more closely. Only then did the alligators get up from where they were sleeping, run down into the water, and swim out behind the dam, where they lay floating and looking downstream between the piles. They could not help laughing, nevertheless, at the joke they had played on the steamboat!

The small boat came up, and the men in it saw how the alligators had made a dam across the river. They went back to the steamer, but soon after, came rowing up toward the dam again.

"Hey, you, alligators!"

"What can we do for you?" answered the alligators, sticking their heads through between the piles in the dam.

"That dam is in our way!" said the men.

"Tell us something we don't know!" answered the alligators.

"But we can't get by!"

"I'll say so!"

"Well, take the old thing out of the way!"

"Nosireesir!"

The men in the boat talked it over for a while and then they called:

"Alligators!"

"What can we do for you?"

"Will you take the dam away?"

"No!"

"No?"

"No!"

"Very well! See you later!"

"The later the better," said the alligators.

The rowboat went back to the steamer, while the alligators, as happy as could be, clapped their tails as loud as they could on the water. No boat could ever get by that dam, and drive the fish away again!

But the next day the steamboat returned; and when the alligators looked at it, they could not say a word from their surprise: it was not the same boat at all, but a larger one, painted gray like a mouse! How many steamboats were there, anyway? And this one probably would want to pass the dam! Well, just let it try! No, sir! No steamboat, little or big, would ever get through that dam!

"They shall not pass!" said the alligators, each taking up his station behind the piles in the dam.

The new boat, like the other one, stopped some distance below the dam; and again a little boat came rowing toward them. This time there were eight sailors in it, with one officer. The officer shouted:

"Hey, you, alligators!"

"What's the matter?" answered the alligators.

"Going to get that dam out of there?"

"No!"

"No?"

"No!"

"Very well!" said the officer. "In that case, we shall have to shoot it down!"

"Shoot it up if you want to!" said the alligators.

And the boat returned to the steamer.

But now, this mouse-gray steamboat was not an ordinary steamboat: it was a warship, with armor plate and terribly powerful guns. The old alligator who had made the trip to the river mouth suddenly remembered, and just in time to shout to the other alligators: "Duck for your lives! Duck! She's going to shoot! Keep down deep under water."

The alligators dived all at the same time, and headed for the shore, where they halted, keeping all their bodies out of sight except for their noses and their eyes. A great cloud of flame and smoke burst from the vessel's side, followed by a deafening report. An immense solid shot hurtled through the air and struck the dam exactly in the middle. Two or three tree trunks were cut away into splinters and drifted off downstream. Another shot, a third, and finally a fourth, each tearing a great hole in the dam. Finally the piles were entirely destroyed; not a tree, not a splinter, not a piece of bark, was left; and the alligators, still sitting with their eyes and noses just out of water, saw the warship come steaming by and blowing its whistle in derision at them.

Then the alligators came out on the bank and held a council of war. "Our dam was not strong enough," said they; "we must make a new and much thicker one."

So they worked again all that afternoon and night, cutting down the very biggest trees they could find, and making a much better dam than they had built before. When the gunboat appeared the next day, they were sleeping soundly and had to hurry to get behind the piles of the dam by the time the rowboat arrived there.

"Hey, alligators!" called the same officer.

"See who's here again!" said the alligators, jeeringly.

"Get that new dam out of there!"

"Never in the world!"

"Well, we'll blow it up, the way we did the other!"

"Blaze away, and good luck to you!"

You see, the alligators talked so big because they were sure the dam they had made this time would hold up against the most terrible cannon balls in the world. And the sailors must have thought so, too; for after they had fired the first shot a tremendous explosion occurred in the dam. The gunboat was using shells, which burst among the timbers of the dam and broke the thickest trees into tiny, tiny bits. A second shell exploded right near the first, and a third near the second. So the shots went all along the dam, each tearing away a long strip of it till nothing, nothing, nothing was left. Again the warship came steaming by, closer in toward shore on this occasion, so that the sailors could make fun of the alligators by putting their hands to their mouths and holloing.

"So that's it!" said the alligators, climbing up out of the water. "We must all die, because the steamboats will keep coming and going, up and down, and leaving us not a fish in the world to eat!"

The littlest alligators were already whimpering; for they had had no dinner for three days; and it was a crowd of very sad alligators that gathered on the river shore to hear what the old alligator now had to say.

"We have only one hope left," he began. "We must go and see the Sturgeon! When I was a boy, I took that trip down to the sea along with him. He liked the salt water better than I did, and went quite a way out into the ocean. There he saw a sea fight between two of these boats; and he brought home a torpedo that had failed to explode. Suppose we go and ask him to give it to us. It is true the Sturgeon has never liked us alligators; but I got along with him pretty well myself. He is a good fellow, at bottom, and surely he will not want to see us all starve!"

The fact was that some years before an alligator had eaten one of the Sturgeon's favorite grandchildren; and for that reason the Sturgeon had refused ever since to call on the alligators or receive visits from them. Nevertheless, the alligators now trouped off in a body to the big cave under the bank of the river where they knew the Sturgeon stayed, with his torpedo beside him. There are sturgeons as much as six feet long, you know, and this one with the torpedo was of that kind.

"Mr. Sturgeon! Mr. Sturgeon!" called the alligators at the entrance of the cave. No one of them dared go in, you see, on account of that matter of the sturgeon's grandchild.

"Who is it?" answered the Sturgeon.

"We're the alligators," the latter replied in a chorus.

"I have nothing to do with alligators," grumbled the Sturgeon crossly.

But now the old alligator with the two teeth stepped forward and said:

"Why, hello, Sturgy. Don't you remember Ally, your old friend that took that trip down the river, when we were boys?"

"Well, well! Where have you been keeping yourself all these years," said the Sturgeon, surprised and pleased to hear his old friend's voice.

"Sorry I didn't know it was you! How goes it? What can I do for you?"

"We've come to ask you for that torpedo you found, remember? You see, there's a warship keeps coming up and down our river scaring all the fish away. She's a whopper, I'll tell you, armor plate, guns, the whole thing! We made one dam and she knocked it down. We made another and she blew it up. The fish have all gone away and we haven't had a bite to eat in near onto a week. Now you give us your torpedo and we'll do the rest!"

The Sturgeon sat thinking for a long time, scratching his chin with one of his fins. At last he answered:

"As for the torpedo, all right! You can have it in spite of what you did to my eldest son's first-born. But there's one trouble: who knows how to

work the thing?"

The alligators were all silent. Not one of them had ever seen a torpedo.

"Well," said the Sturgeon, proudly, "I can see I'll have to go with you myself. I've lived next to that torpedo a long time. I know all about torpedoes."

The first task was to bring the torpedo down to the dam. The alligators got into line, the one behind taking in his mouth the tail of the one in front. When the line was formed it was fully a quarter of a mile long. The Sturgeon pushed the torpedo out into the current, and got under it so as to hold it up near the top of the water on his back. Then he took the tail of the last alligator in his teeth, and gave the signal to go ahead. The Sturgeon kept the torpedo afloat, while the alligators towed him along. In this way they went so fast that a wide wake followed on after the torpedo; and by the next morning they were back at the place where the dam was made.

As the little alligators who had stayed at home reported, the warship had already gone by upstream. But this pleased the others all the more. Now they would build a new dam, stronger than ever before, and catch the steamer in a trap, so that it would never get home again.

They worked all that day and all the next night, making a thick, almost solid dike, with barely enough room between the piles for the alligators to stick their heads through. They had just finished when the gunboat came into view.

Again the rowboat approached with the eight men and their officer. The alligators crowded behind the dam in great excitement, moving their paws to hold their own with the current; for this time, they were downstream.

"Hey, alligators!" called the officer.

"Well?" answered the alligators.

"Still another dam?"

"If at first you don't succeed, try, try, again!"

"Get that dam out of there!"

"No, sir!"

"You won't?"

"We won't!"

"Very well! Now you alligators just listen! If you won't be reasonable, we are going to knock this dam down, too. But to save you the trouble of building a fourth, we are going to shoot every blessed alligator around here. Yes, every single last alligator, women and children, big ones, little ones, fat ones, lean ones, and even that old codger sitting there with only two teeth left in his jaws!"

The old alligator understood that the officer was trying to insult him with that reference to his two teeth, and he answered:

"Young man, what you say is true. I have only two teeth left, not counting one or two others that are broken off. But do you know what those two teeth are going to eat for dinner?" As he said this the old alligator opened his mouth wide, wide, wide.

"Well, what are they going to eat?" asked one of the sailors.

"A little dude of a naval officer I see in a boat over there!" --and the old alligator dived under water and disappeared from view.

Meantime the Sturgeon had brought the torpedo to the very center of the dam, where four alligators were holding it fast to the river bottom waiting for orders to bring it up to the top of the water. The other alligators had gathered along the shore, with their noses and eyes alone in sight as usual.

The rowboat went back to the ship. When he saw the men climbing aboard, the Sturgeon went down to his torpedo.

Suddenly there was a loud detonation. The warship had begun firing, and the first shell struck and exploded in the middle of the dam. A great

gap opened in it.

"Now! Now!" called the Sturgeon sharply, on seeing that there was room for the torpedo to go through. "Let her go! Let her go!"

As the torpedo came to the surface, the Sturgeon steered it to the opening in the dam, took aim hurriedly with one eye closed, and pulled at the trigger of the torpedo with his teeth. The propeller of the torpedo began to revolve, and it started off upstream toward the gunboat.

And it was high time. At that instant a second shot exploded in the dam, tearing away another large section.

From the wake the torpedo left behind it in the water the men on the vessel saw the danger they were in, but it was too late to do anything about it. The torpedo struck the ship in the middle, and went off.

You can never guess the terrible noise that torpedo made. It blew the warship into fifteen thousand million pieces, tossing guns, and smokestacks, and shells and rowboats--everything, hundreds and hundreds of yards away.

The alligators all screamed with triumph and made as fast as they could for the dam. Down through the opening bits of wood came floating, with a number of sailors swimming as hard as they could for the shore. As the men passed through, the alligators put their paws to their mouths and holloed, as the men had done to them three days before. They decided not to eat a single one of the sailors, though some of them deserved it without a doubt. Except that when a man dressed in a blue uniform with gold braid came by, the old alligator jumped into the water off the dam, and snap! snap! ate him in two mouthfuls.

"Who was that man?" asked an ignorant young alligator, who never learned his lessons in school and never knew what was going on.

"It's the officer of the boat," answered the Sturgeon. "My old friend, Ally, said he was going to eat him, and eaten him he has!"

The alligators tore down the rest of the dam, because they knew that no

boats would be coming by that way again.

The Sturgeon, who had quite fallen in love with the gold lace of the officer, asked that it be given him in payment for the use of his torpedo. The alligators said he might have it for the trouble of picking it out of the old alligator's mouth, where it had caught on the two teeth. They gave him also the officer's belt and sword. The Sturgeon put the belt on just behind his front fins, and buckled the sword to it. Thus toggged out, he swam up and down for more than an hour in front of the assembled alligators, who admired his beautiful spotted skin as something almost as pretty as the coral snake's, and who opened their mouths wide at the splendor of his uniform. Finally they escorted him in honor back to his cave under the river bank, thanking him over and over again, and giving him three cheers as they went off.

When they returned to their usual place they found the fish had already returned. The next day another steamboat came by; but the alligators did not care, because the fish were getting used to it by this time and seemed not to be afraid. Since then the boats have been going back and forth all the time, carrying oranges. And the alligators open their eyes when they hear the _chug! chug! chug!_ of a steamboat and laugh at the thought of how scared they were the first time, and of how they sank the warship.

But no warship has ever gone up the river since the old alligator ate the officer.



THE SNOW-DAUGHTER AND THE FIRE-SON

From the _Bukowinaer Tales and Legends_. Von Wliolocki

Project Gutenberg's *The Yellow Fairy Book*, by Leonora Blanche Alleyne Lang

There was once upon a time a man and his wife, and they had no children, which was a great grief to them. One winter's day, when the sun was shining brightly, the couple were standing outside their cottage, and the woman was looking at all the little icicles which hung from the roof. She sighed, and turning to her husband said, 'I wish I had as many children as there are icicles hanging there.' 'Nothing would please me more either,' replied her husband. Then a tiny icicle detached itself from the roof, and dropped into the woman's mouth, who swallowed it with a smile, and said, 'Perhaps I shall give birth to a snow child now!' Her husband laughed at his wife's strange idea, and they went back into the house.

But after a short time the woman gave birth to a little girl, who was as white as snow and as cold as ice. If they brought the child anywhere near the fire, it screamed loudly till they put it back into some cool place. The little maid thrived wonderfully, and in a few months she could run about and speak. But she was not altogether easy to bring up, and gave her parents much trouble and anxiety, for all summer she insisted on spending in the cellar, and in the winter she would sleep outside in the snow, and the colder it was the happier she seemed to be. Her father and mother called her simply 'Our Snow-daughter,' and this name stuck to her all her life.

One day her parents sat by the fire, talking over the extraordinary behaviour of their daughter, who was disporting herself in the snowstorm that raged outside. The woman sighed deeply and said, 'I wish I had given birth to a Fire-son!' As she said these words, a spark from the big wood fire flew into the woman's lap, and she said with a laugh, 'Now perhaps I shall give birth to a Fire-son!' The man laughed at his wife's words, and thought it was a good joke. But he ceased to think it a joke when his wife shortly afterwards gave birth to a boy, who screamed lustily till he was put quite close to the fire, and who nearly yelled himself into a fit if the Snow-daughter came anywhere near him. The Snow-daughter herself avoided him as much as she could, and always crept into a corner as far away from him as possible. The parents called the boy simply 'Our Fire-son,' a name which stuck to him all his life. They had a great deal of trouble and worry with him too; but he thrived and grew very quickly, and before he was a year old he could run about and talk. He was as red as fire, and as hot to touch, and he always sat on the hearth quite close to the

fire, and complained of the cold; if his sister were in the room he almost crept into the flames, while the girl on her part always complained of the great heat if her brother were anywhere near. In summer the boy always lay out in the sun, while the girl hid herself in the cellar: so it happened that the brother and sister came very little into contact with each other--in fact, they carefully avoided it.

Just as the girl grew up into a beautiful woman, her father and mother both died one after the other. Then the Fire-son, who had grown up in the meantime into a fine, strong young man, said to his sister, 'I am going out into the world, for what is the use of remaining on here?'

'I shall go with you,' she answered, 'for, except you, I have no one in the world, and I have a feeling that if we set out together we shall be lucky.'

The Fire-son said, 'I love you with all my heart, but at the same time I always freeze if you are near me, and you nearly die of heat if I approach you! How shall we travel about together without being odious the one to the other?'

'Don't worry about that,' replied the girl, 'for I've thought it all over, and have settled on a plan which will make us each able to bear with the other! See, I have had a fur cloak made for each of us, and if we put them on I shall not feel the heat so much nor you the cold.' So they put on the fur cloaks, and set out cheerfully on their way, and for the first time in their lives quite happy in each other's company.

For a long time the Fire-son and the Snow-daughter wandered through the world, and when at the beginning of winter they came to a big wood they determined to stay there till spring. The Fire-son built himself a hut where he always kept up a huge fire, while his sister with very few clothes on stayed outside night and day. Now it happened one day that the King of the land held a hunt in this wood, and saw the Snow-daughter wandering about in the open air. He wondered very much who the beautiful girl clad in such garments could be, and he stopped and spoke to her. He soon learnt that she could not stand heat, and that her brother could not endure cold. The King was so charmed by the

Snow-daughter, that he asked her to be his wife. The girl consented, and the wedding was held with much state. The King had a huge house of ice made for his wife underground, so that even in summer it did not melt. But for his brother-in-law he had a house built with huge ovens all round it, that were kept heated all day and night. The Fire-son was delighted, but the perpetual heat in which he lived made his body so hot, that it was dangerous to go too close to him.

One day the King gave a great feast, and asked his brother-in-law among the other guests. The Fire-son did not appear till everyone had assembled, and when he did, everyone fled outside to the open air, so intense was the heat he gave forth. Then the King was very angry and said, 'If I had known what a lot of trouble you would have been, I would never have taken you into my house.' Then the Fire-son replied with a laugh, 'Don't be angry, dear brother! I love heat and my sister loves cold--come here and let me embrace you, and then I'll go home at once.' And before the King had time to reply, the Fire-son seized him in a tight embrace. The King screamed aloud in agony, and when his wife, the Snow-daughter, who had taken refuge from her brother in the next room, hurried to him, the King lay dead on the ground burnt to a cinder. When the Snow-daughter saw this she turned on her brother and flew at him. Then a fight began, the like of which had never been seen on earth. When the people, attracted by the noise, hurried to the spot, they saw the Snow-daughter melting into water and the Fire-son burn to a cinder. And so ended the unhappy brother and sister.



BIG BELLY

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *In Indian Tents*, by Abby Langdon Alger

There was once an old hunter called "Mawquejess," who always carried a kettle to cook his "michwagan," food. When he killed an animal, he would build a wigwam on the spot, and stay there until the meat was all eaten. He always made it into soup, and called it, "M'Kessabum," my soup. He

had eaten soup until his stomach was distended to a monstrous size. From this he took his name of Mawquejess, Big Belly.

One day he saw a wigwam, and went to the door to see who lived in it. He found a boy, who made friends with him and invited him in; but the door was too small for his big stomach, and the boy was forced to remove the side of the wigwam to accommodate it.

They were very happy together and Mawquejess did nothing but care for the camp, while the boy did the hunting. At last Mawquejess told the boy to go to a certain place and kill a white bear.

His intention was, if he could get a white bear-skin, to marry a chief's daughter. The chief had offered her to any one who would kill a white bear and bring him the skin.[22]

The boy tried to kill the bear for Mawquejess, but failed; and Mawquejess began to be discouraged; then he thought: "I will go myself."

He found he was too big to get into the canoe. His legs dangled in the water so that he could not paddle, and he had to give it up. When the boy landed him, he made up his mind that the first time he could catch Mawquejess asleep, his friend should be cut open and the soup allowed to escape. So he sharpened his stone axe and quickly cut his friend open; a large stream of soup flowed out. Mawquejess awoke, crying: "M'Kessabumisa!" (Alas, my soup!) He went on crying and mourning until the boy said: "You had better stop crying and try to kill the white bear."

Next day they started; he got into the canoe quite easily, and they killed the white bear the first time of trying.

"Now," said Mawquejess, "we will go to the village, to the playground of the boys. When they come to play, I will try to kill the chief's son [Sagmasis]."

When they got there, the boys came to play as usual. Mawquejess, who was hiding behind a bush, struck the young chief and killed him at the first blow.

The rest fled. Then he skinned the young chief, and put on the skin himself, thus appearing like a war chief. He called his little friend to follow with the bear-skin. Together they went to the great chief's wigwam, where the bear-skin was accepted, and, according to ancient custom, a big dance was given to celebrate the marriage. It lasted for many nights.

"Pukjinsquess," the chief's wife, mistrusted her new son-in-law from the first, and called the attention of others to him. About this time the skin which he had put on began to decay; and soon he stood revealed, no young chief, but Mawquejess himself.

They began to kick and beat him. Mawquejess called aloud to his little friend to help him; but his little friend could not help him, for he was running for his life, crying: "Let me always belong to the woods."

Thus he was changed to a Partridge, and flew away; and his pursuers were forced to give up the chase.

Poor Mawquejess too cried out: "Let me be a crow;" and he was. He also flew away, saying: "Ca, ca, ca!" (I fly away); and so both escaped.



THE SING-SONG OF OLD MAN KANGAROO

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Just So Stories*, by Rudyard Kipling

NOT always was the Kangaroo as now we do behold him, but a Different Animal with four short legs. He was grey and he was woolly, and his pride was inordinate: he danced on an outcrop in the middle of Australia, and he went to the Little God Nqa.

He went to Nqa at six before breakfast, saying, 'Make me different from

all other animals by five this afternoon.'

Up jumped Nqa from his seat on the sandflat and shouted, 'Go away!'

He was grey and he was woolly, and his pride was inordinate: he danced on a rock-ledge in the middle of Australia, and he went to the Middle God Nquing.

He went to Nquing at eight after breakfast, saying, 'Make me different from all other animals; make me, also, wonderfully popular by five this afternoon.'

Up jumped Nquing from his burrow in the spinifex and shouted, 'Go away!'

He was grey and he was woolly, and his pride was inordinate: he danced on a sandbank in the middle of Australia, and he went to the Big God Nqong.

He went to Nqong at ten before dinner-time, saying, 'Make me different from all other animals; make me popular and wonderfully run after by five this afternoon.'

Up jumped Nqong from his bath in the salt-pan and shouted, 'Yes, I will!'

Nqong called Dingo--Yellow-Dog Dingo--always hungry, dusty in the sunshine, and showed him Kangaroo. Nqong said, 'Dingo! Wake up, Dingo! Do you see that gentleman dancing on an ashpit? He wants to be popular and very truly run after. Dingo, make him SO!'

Up jumped Dingo--Yellow-Dog Dingo--and said, 'What, that cat-rabbit?'

Off ran Dingo--Yellow-Dog Dingo--always hungry, grinning like a coal-scuttle,--ran after Kangaroo.

Off went the proud Kangaroo on his four little legs like a bunny.

This, O Beloved of mine, ends the first part of the tale!

He ran through the desert; he ran through the mountains; he ran through

the salt-pans; he ran through the reed-beds; he ran through the blue gums; he ran through the spinifex; he ran till his front legs ached.

He had to!

Still ran Dingo--Yellow-Dog Dingo--always hungry, grinning like a rat-trap, never getting nearer, never getting farther,--ran after Kangaroo.

He had to!

Still ran Kangaroo--Old Man Kangaroo. He ran through the ti-trees; he ran through the mulga; he ran through the long grass; he ran through the short grass; he ran through the Tropics of Capricorn and Cancer; he ran till his hind legs ached.

He had to!

Still ran Dingo--Yellow-Dog Dingo--hungrier and hungrier, grinning like a horse-collar, never getting nearer, never getting farther; and they came to the Wollgong River.

Now, there wasn't any bridge, and there wasn't any ferry-boat, and Kangaroo didn't know how to get over; so he stood on his legs and hopped.

He had to!

He hopped through the Flinders; he hopped through the Cinders; he hopped through the deserts in the middle of Australia. He hopped like a Kangaroo.

First he hopped one yard; then he hopped three yards; then he hopped five yards; his legs growing stronger; his legs growing longer. He hadn't any time for rest or refreshment, and he wanted them very much.

Still ran Dingo--Yellow-Dog Dingo--very much bewildered, very much hungry, and wondering what in the world or out of it made Old Man Kangaroo hop.

For he hopped like a cricket; like a pea in a saucepan; or a new rubber ball on a nursery floor.

He had to!

He tucked up his front legs; he hopped on his hind legs; he stuck out his tail for a balance-weight behind him; and he hopped through the Darling Downs.

He had to!

Still ran Dingo--Tired-Dog Dingo--hungrier and hungrier, very much bewildered, and wondering when in the world or out of it would Old Man Kangaroo stop.

Then came Nqong from his bath in the salt-pans, and said, 'It's five o'clock.'

Down sat Dingo--Poor Dog Dingo--always hungry, dusky in the sunshine; hung out his tongue and howled.

Down sat Kangaroo--Old Man Kangaroo--stuck out his tail like a milking-stool behind him, and said, 'Thank goodness that's finished!'

Then said Nqong, who is always a gentleman, 'Why aren't you grateful to Yellow-Dog Dingo? Why don't you thank him for all he has done for you?'

Then said Kangaroo--Tired Old Kangaroo--He's chased me out of the homes of my childhood; he's chased me out of my regular meal-times; he's altered my shape so I'll never get it back; and he's played Old Scratch with my legs.'

Then said Nqong, 'Perhaps I'm mistaken, but didn't you ask me to make you different from all other animals, as well as to make you very truly sought after? And now it is five o'clock.'

'Yes,' said Kangaroo. 'I wish that I hadn't. I thought you would do it by charms and incantations, but this is a practical joke.'

'Joke!' said Nqong from his bath in the blue gums. 'Say that again and

I'll whistle up Dingo and run your hind legs off.'

'No,' said the Kangaroo. 'I must apologise. Legs are legs, and you needn't alter 'em so far as I am concerned. I only meant to explain to Your Lordliness that I've had nothing to eat since morning, and I'm very empty indeed.'

'Yes,' said Dingo--Yellow-Dog Dingo--'I am just in the same situation. I've made him different from all other animals; but what may I have for my tea?'

Then said Nqong from his bath in the salt-pan, 'Come and ask me about it tomorrow, because I'm going to wash.'

So they were left in the middle of Australia, Old Man Kangaroo and Yellow-Dog Dingo, and each said, 'That's your fault.'

THIS is the mouth-filling song
Of the race that was run by a Boomer,
Run in a single burst--only event of its kind--
Started by big God Nqong from Warrigaborrigarooma,
Old Man Kangaroo first: Yellow-Dog Dingo behind.

Kangaroo bounded away,
His back-legs working like pistons--
Bounded from morning till dark,
Twenty-five feet to a bound.
Yellow-Dog Dingo lay
Like a yellow cloud in the distance--
Much too busy to bark.
My! but they covered the ground!

Nobody knows where they went,
Or followed the track that they flew in,
For that Continent
Hadn't been given a name.
They ran thirty degrees,
From Torres Straits to the Leeuwin
(Look at the Atlas, please),

And they ran back as they came.

S'posing you could trot
From Adelaide to the Pacific,
For an afternoon's run
Half what these gentlemen did
You would feel rather hot,
But your legs would develop terrific--
Yes, my importunate son,
You'd be a Marvellous Kid!



Selections From Project Gutenberg Etext of *Aesop's Fables*:

THE FISHER AND THE LITTLE FISH

It happened that a Fisher, after fishing all day, caught only a little fish. "Pray, let me go, master," said the Fish. "I am much too small for your eating just now. If you put me back into the river I shall soon grow, then you can make a fine meal off me."

"Nay, nay, my little Fish," said the Fisher, "I have you now. I may not catch you hereafter."

A little thing in hand is worth more than a great thing in prospect.

AVARICIOUS AND ENVIOUS

Two neighbours came before Jupiter and prayed him to grant their hearts' desire. Now the one was full of avarice, and the other eaten up with envy. So to punish them both, Jupiter granted

that each might have whatever he wished for himself, but only on condition that his neighbour had twice as much. The Avaricious man prayed to have a room full of gold. No sooner said than done; but all his joy was turned to grief when he found that his neighbour had two rooms full of the precious metal. Then came the turn of the Envious man, who could not bear to think that his neighbour had any joy at all. So he prayed that he might have one of his own eyes put out, by which means his companion would become totally blind.

Vices are their own punishment.

THE CROW AND THE PITCHER

A Crow, half-dead with thirst, came upon a Pitcher which had once been full of water; but when the Crow put its beak into the mouth of the Pitcher he found that only very little water was left in it, and that he could not reach far enough down to get at it. He tried, and he tried, but at last had to give up in despair. Then a thought came to him, and he took a pebble and dropped it into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped it into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped that into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped that into the Pitcher. Then he took another pebble and dropped that into the Pitcher. At last, at last, he saw the water mount up near him, and after casting in a few more pebbles he was able to quench his thirst and save his life.

Little by little does the trick.

THE FOX AND THE CAT

A Fox was boasting to a Cat of its clever devices for escaping its enemies. "I have a whole bag of tricks," he said, "which contains a hundred ways of escaping my enemies."

"I have only one," said the Cat; "but I can generally manage with that." Just at that moment they heard the cry of a pack of

hounds coming towards them, and the Cat immediately scampered up a tree and hid herself in the boughs. "This is my plan," said the Cat. "What are you going to do?" The Fox thought first of one way, then of another, and while he was debating the hounds came nearer and nearer, and at last the Fox in his confusion was caught up by the hounds and soon killed by the huntsmen. Miss Puss, who had been looking on, said:

"Better one safe way than a hundred on which you cannot reckon."

THE WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

A Wolf found great difficulty in getting at the sheep owing to the vigilance of the shepherd and his dogs. But one day it found the skin of a sheep that had been flayed and thrown aside, so it put it on over its own pelt and strolled down among the sheep. The Lamb that belonged to the sheep, whose skin the Wolf was wearing, began to follow the Wolf in the Sheep's clothing; so, leading the Lamb a little apart, he soon made a meal off her, and for some time he succeeded in deceiving the sheep, and enjoying hearty meals.

Appearances are deceptive.



THE DREAM OF KING KARNA-VOOTRA

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Fifty-One Tales* by Lord Dunsany

King Karna-Vootra sitting on his throne commanding all things said: "I very clearly saw last night the queenly Vava-Nyria. Though partly she was hidden by great clouds that swept continually by her, rolling over and over, yet her face was unhidden and shone, being full of moonlight.

"I said to her:

"Walk with me by the great pools in many-gardened, beautiful Istrakhan where the lilies float that give delectable dreams; or, drawing aside the curtain of hanging orchids, pass with me thence from the pools by a secret path through the else impassable jungle that fills the only way between the mountains that shut in Istrakhan. They shut it in and look on it with joy at morning and at evening when the pools are strange with light, till in their gladness sometimes there melts the deadly snow that kills upon lonely heights the mountaineer. They have valleys among them older than the wrinkles in the moon.

"Come with me thence or linger with me there and either we shall come to romantic lands which the men of the caravans only speak of in song; or else we shall listlessly walk in a land so lovely that even the butterflies that float about it when they see their images flash in the sacred pools are terrified by their beauty, and each night we shall hear the myriad nightingales all in one chorus sing the stars to death. Do this and I will send heralds far from here with tidings of thy beauty; and they shall run and come to Séndara and men shall know it there who herd brown sheep; and from Séndara the rumour shall spread on, down either bank of the holy river of Zoth, till the people that make wattles in the plains shall hear of it and sing; but the heralds shall go northward along the hills until they come to Sooma. And in that golden city they shall tell the kings, that sit in their lofty alabaster house, of thy strange and sudden smiles. And often in distant markets shall thy story be told by merchants out from Sooma as they sit telling careless tales to lure men to their wares.

"And the heralds passing thence shall come even to Ingra, to Ingra where they dance. And there they shall tell of thee, so that thy name long hence shall be sung in that joyous city. And there they shall borrow camels and pass over the sands and go by desert ways to distant Nirid to tell of thee to the lonely men in the mountain monasteries.

"Come with me even now for it is Spring."

"And as I said this she faintly yet perceptibly shook her head. And it was only then I remembered my youth was gone, and she dead forty years."



THE FIRST MIRACLE OF JESUS.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *De La Salle Fifth Reader*
by Brothers of the Christian Schools

In the first year of our Lord's public life, St. John tells us in his gospel that "there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited to the marriage." Mary was invited to be one of the honored guests because she was, no doubt, an intimate friend of the family. She preceded her Son to the wedding in order to lend her aid in the necessary preparations.

Jesus also was asked, and He did not refuse the invitation. He went as freely to this house of feasting as He afterwards went pityingly to so many houses of mourning. Though worn and weary with his long fast and struggle in the desert, He was pleased to attend this merry wedding feast, and by this loving and kindly act to sanctify the bond of Marriage, which was to become in His Church one of the seven Sacraments.

The feast went gayly onward until an incident occurred that greatly disturbed the host. The wine failed. The host had not calculated rightly, or perhaps he had not counted on so many guests.

Mary, with her motherly heart, was the first to notice the confusion of the servants when they discovered that the wine vessels had become empty; and leaning towards her Son, whispered, "They have no wine." "My hour is not yet come," He answered her, meaning that His time for working miracles had not yet arrived. He knew on the instant what the gentle heart of His Mother desired. His words sounded like a refusal of the request which Mary made rather with her eyes than with her tongue; but the sequel shows that the Blessed Mother fully believed that her prayer would be granted.

She quietly said to the servants, "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." They had not long to wait. There were standing close at hand six great urns of stone, covered with branches, as is the custom in the East, in order to keep the water cool and fresh. These vessels "containing two or three measures apiece," were kept in readiness for the guests, who were required not only to wash their feet before touching the linen and drapery of the couches, but even during the meal frequently to purify their hands. Already there had been many of these ablutions performed, and the urns were being rapidly emptied.

"Fill the waterpots with water," said Jesus to the servants.

They filled them up to the brim with clear, fresh water.

"Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast."

And they carried it.

When the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, he called the bridegroom and said to him: "Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drunk then that which is worse; but thou hast kept the good wine until now."

The steward had supposed at first that the host had wished to give an agreeable surprise to the company assembled at his table; but the latter, to his amazement, was at once made aware that a wondrous deed had been accomplished--that water had been changed into wine!

Jesus had performed His first Miracle.

From this beautiful story of the first miracle of Jesus, we learn that Jesus Christ is God, and that Mary, the Mother of God, whose intercession is all-powerful with her Divine Son, has a loving and motherly care over the smallest of our life's concerns.



THE TEMPEST

Project Gutenberg's *Tales from Shakespeare*, by Charles Lamb and Mary Lamb

There was a certain island in the sea, the only inhabitants of which were an old man, whose name was Prospero, and his daughter Miranda, a very beautiful young lady. She came to this island so young, that she had no memory of having seen any other human face than her father's.

They lived in a cave or cell, made out of a rock; it was divided into several apartments, one of which Prospero called his study; there he kept his books, which chiefly treated of magic, a study at that time much affected by all learned men: and the knowledge of this art he found very useful to him; for being thrown by a strange chance upon this island, which had been enchanted by a witch called Sycorax, who died there a short time before his arrival, Prospero, by virtue of his art, released many good spirits that Sycorax had imprisoned in the bodies of large trees, because they had refused to execute her wicked commands. These gentle spirits were ever after obedient to the will of Prospero. Of these Ariel was the chief.

The lively little sprite Ariel had nothing mischievous in his nature, except that he took rather too much pleasure in tormenting an ugly monster called Caliban, for he owed him a grudge because he was the son of his old enemy Sycorax. This Caliban, Prospero found in the woods, a strange misshapen thing, far less human in form than an ape: he took him home to his cell, and taught him to speak; and Prospero would have been very kind to him, but the bad nature which Caliban inherited from his mother Sycorax, would not let him learn anything good or useful: therefore he was employed like a slave, to fetch wood, and do the most laborious offices; and Ariel had the charge of compelling him to these services.

When Caliban was lazy and neglected his work, Ariel (who was invisible to all eyes but Prospero's) would come slyly and pinch him, and sometimes tumble him down in the mire; and then Ariel, in the likeness of an ape, would make mouths at him. Then swiftly changing his shape, in the likeness of a hedgehog, he would lie tumbling in Caliban's way, who feared the hedgehog's sharp quills would prick his bare feet. With a variety of such-like vexatious tricks Ariel would often torment him, whenever Caliban neglected the work which Prospero commanded him to do.

Having these powerful spirits obedient to his will, Prospero could by their means command the winds, and the waves of the sea. By his orders they raised a violent storm, in the midst of which, and struggling with the wild sea-waves that every moment threatened to swallow it up, he showed his daughter a fine large ship, which he told her was full of living beings like themselves. "O my dear father," said she, "if by your art you have raised this dreadful storm, have pity on their sad distress. See! the vessel will be dashed to pieces. Poor souls! they will all perish. If I had power, I would sink the sea beneath the earth, rather than the good ship should be destroyed, with all the precious souls within her."

"Be not so amazed, daughter Miranda," said Prospero; "there is no harm done. I have so ordered it, that no person in the ship shall receive any hurt. What I have done has been in care of you, my dear child. You are ignorant who you are, or where you came from, and you know no more of me, but that I am your father, and live in this poor cave. Can you remember a time before you came to this cell? I think you cannot, for you were not then three years of age."

"Certainly I can, sir," replied Miranda.

"By what?" asked Prospero; "by any other house or person? Tell me what you can remember, my child."

Miranda said, "It seems to me like the recollection of a dream. But had I not once four or five women who attended upon me?"

Prospero answered, "You had, and more. How is it that this still lives in your mind? Do you remember how you came here?"

"No, sir," said Miranda, "I remember nothing more."

"Twelve years ago, Miranda," continued Prospero, "I was Duke of Milan, and you were a princess, and my only heir. I had a younger brother, whose name was Antonio, to whom I trusted everything; and as I was fond of retirement and deep study, I commonly left the management of my state affairs to your uncle, my false brother (for so indeed he proved). I, neglecting all worldly ends, buried among my books, did dedicate my whole time to the bettering of my mind. My brother Antonio being thus in possession of my power, began to think himself the duke indeed. The opportunity I gave him of making himself popular among my subjects awakened in his bad nature a proud ambition to deprive me of my dukedom: this he soon effected with the aid of the King of Naples, a powerful prince, who was my enemy."

"Wherefore," said Miranda, "did they not that hour destroy us?"

"My child," answered her father, "they durst not, so dear was the love that my people bore me. Antonio carried us on board a ship, and when we were some leagues out at sea, he forced us into a small boat, without either tackle, sail, or mast: there he left us, as he thought, to perish. But a kind lord of my court, one Gonzalo, who loved me, had privately placed in the boat, water, provisions, apparel, and some books which I prize above my dukedom."

"O my father," said Miranda, "what a trouble must I have been to you then!"

"No, my love," said Prospero, "you were a little cherub that did preserve me. Your innocent smiles made me bear up against my misfortunes. Our food lasted till we landed on this desert island, since when my chief delight has been in teaching you, Miranda, and well have you profited by my instructions."

"Heaven thank you, my dear father," said Miranda. "Now pray tell me, sir, your reason for raising this sea-storm?"

"Know then," said her father, "that by means of this storm, my enemies, the King of Naples, and my cruel brother, are cast ashore upon this island."

Having so said, Prospero gently touched his daughter with his magic wand, and she fell fast asleep; for the spirit Ariel just then presented himself before his master, to give an account of the tempest, and how he had disposed of the ship's company, and though the spirits were always invisible to Miranda, Prospero did not choose she should hear him holding converse (as would seem to her) with the empty air.

"Well, my brave spirit," said Prospero to Ariel, "how have you performed your task?"

Ariel gave a lively description of the storm, and of the terrors of the mariners; and how the king's son, Ferdinand, was the first who leaped into the sea; and his father thought he saw his dear son swallowed up by the waves and lost. "But he is safe," said Ariel, "in a corner of the isle, sitting with his arms folded, sadly lamenting the loss of the king, his father, whom he concludes drowned. Not a hair of his head is injured, and his princely garments, though drenched in the sea-waves, look fresher than before."

"That's my delicate Ariel," said Prospero. "Bring him hither: my daughter must see this young prince. Where is the king, and my brother?"

"I left them," answered Ariel, "searching for Ferdinand, whom they have little hopes of finding, thinking they saw him perish. Of the ship's crew not one is missing; though each one thinks himself the only one saved: and the ship, though invisible to them, is safe in the harbour."

"Ariel," said Prospero, "thy charge is faithfully performed: but there is more work yet."

"Is there more work?" said Ariel. "Let me remind you, master, you have promised me my liberty. I pray, remember, I have done you worthy service, told you no lies, made no mistakes, served you without grudge or grumbling."

"How now!" said Prospero. "You do not recollect what a torment I freed you from. Have you forgot the wicked witch Sycorax, who with age and envy was almost bent double? Where was she born? Speak; tell me."

"Sir, in Algiers," said Ariel.

"O was she so?" said Prospero. "I must recount what you have been, which I find you do not remember. This bad witch, Sycorax, for her witch-crafts, too terrible to enter human hearing, was banished from Algiers, and here left by the sailors; and because you were a spirit too delicate to execute her wicked commands, she shut you up in a tree, where I found you howling. This torment, remember, I did free you from."

"Pardon me, dear master," said Ariel, ashamed to seem ungrateful; "I will obey your commands."

"Do so," said Prospero, "and I will set you free." He then gave orders what further he would have him do; and away went Ariel, first to where he had left Ferdinand, and found him still sitting on the grass in the same melancholy posture.

"O my young gentleman," said Ariel, when he saw him, "I will soon move you. You must be brought, I find, for the Lady Miranda to have a sight of your pretty person. Come, sir, follow me." He then began singing,

"Full fathom five thy father lies:
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Hark! now I hear them,—Ding-dong, bell."

This strange news of his lost father soon roused the prince from the stupid fit into which he had fallen. He followed in amazement the sound of Ariel's voice, till it led him to Prospero and Miranda, who were sitting under the shade of a large tree. Now Miranda had never seen a man before, except her own father.

"Miranda," said Prospero, "tell me what you are looking at yonder."

"O father," said Miranda, in a strange surprise, "surely that is a spirit. Lord! how it looks about! Believe me, sir, it is a beautiful

creature. Is it not a spirit?"

"No, girl," answered her father; "it eats, and sleeps, and has senses such as we have. This young man you see was in the ship. He is somewhat altered by grief, or you might call him a handsome person. He has lost his companions, and is wandering about to find them."

Miranda, who thought all men had grave faces and grey beards like her father, was delighted with the appearance of this beautiful young prince; and Ferdinand, seeing such a lovely lady in this desert place, and from the strange sounds he had heard, expecting nothing but wonders, thought he was upon an enchanted island, and that Miranda was the goddess of the place, and as such he began to address her.

She timidly answered, she was no goddess, but a simple maid, and was going to give him an account of herself, when Prospero interrupted her. He was well pleased to find they admired each other, for he plainly perceived they had (as we say) fallen in love at first sight: but to try Ferdinand's constancy, he resolved to throw some difficulties in their way: therefore advancing forward, he addressed the prince with a stern air, telling him, he came to the island as a spy, to take it from him who was the lord of it. "Follow me," said he, "I will tie you neck and feet together. You shall drink sea-water; shell-fish, withered roots, and husks of acorns shall be your food." "No," said Ferdinand, "I will resist such entertainment, till I see a more powerful enemy," and drew his sword; but Prospero, waving his magic wand, fixed him to the spot where he stood, so that he had no power to move.

Miranda hung upon her father, saying, "Why are you so ungentle? Have pity, sir; I will be his surety. This is the second man I ever saw, and to me he seems a true one."

"Silence," said the father: "one word more will make me chide you, girl! What! an advocate for an impostor! You think there are no more such fine men, having seen only him and Caliban. I tell you, foolish girl, most men as far excel this, as he does Caliban." This he said to prove his daughter's constancy; and she replied, "My affections are most humble. I have no wish to see a goodlier man."

"Come on, young man," said Prospero to the Prince; "you have no power to

disobey me."

"I have not indeed," answered Ferdinand; and not knowing that it was by magic he was deprived of all power of resistance, he was astonished to find himself so strangely compelled to follow Prospero: looking back on Miranda as long as he could see her, he said, as he went after Prospero into the cave, "My spirits are all bound up, as if I were in a dream; but this man's threats, and the weakness which I feel, would seem light to me if from my prison I might once a day behold this fair maid."

Prospero kept Ferdinand not long confined within the cell: he soon brought out his prisoner, and set him a severe task to perform, taking care to let his daughter know the hard labour he had imposed on him, and then pretending to go into his study, he secretly watched them both.

Prospero had commanded Ferdinand to pile up some heavy logs of wood. Kings' sons not being much used to laborious work, Miranda soon after found her lover almost dying with fatigue. "Alas!" said she, "do not work so hard; my father is at his studies, he is safe for these three hours; pray rest yourself."

"O my dear lady," said Ferdinand, "I dare not. I must finish my task before I take my rest."

"If you will sit down," said Miranda, "I will carry your logs the while." But this Ferdinand would by no means agree to. Instead of a help Miranda became a hindrance, for they began a long conversation, so that the business of log-carrying went on very slowly.

Prospero, who had enjoined Ferdinand this task merely as a trial of his love, was not at his books, as his daughter supposed, but was standing by them invisible, to overhear what they said.

Ferdinand inquired her name, which she told, saying it was against her father's express command she did so.

Prospero only smiled at this first instance of his daughter's disobedience, for having by his magic art caused his daughter to fall in love so suddenly, he was not angry that she showed her love by forgetting to obey his commands. And he listened well pleased to a long

speech of Ferdinand's, in which he professed to love her above all the ladies he ever saw.

In answer to his praises of her beauty, which he said exceeded all the women in the world, she replied, "I do not remember the face of any woman, nor have I seen any more men than you, my good friend, and my dear father. How features are abroad, I know not; but, believe me, sir, I would not wish any companion in the world but you, nor can my imagination form any shape but yours that I could like. But, sir, I fear I talk to you too freely, and my father's precepts I forget."

At this Prospero smiled, and nodded his head, as much as to say, "This goes on exactly as I could wish; my girl will be Queen of Naples."

And then Ferdinand, in another fine long speech (for young princes speak in courtly phrases), told the innocent Miranda he was heir to the crown of Naples, and that she should be his queen.

"Ah! sir," said she, "I am a fool to weep at what I am glad of. I will answer you in plain and holy innocence. I am your wife if you will marry me."

Prospero prevented Ferdinand's thanks by appearing visible before them.

"Fear nothing, my child," said he; "I have overheard, and approve of all you have said. And, Ferdinand, if I have too severely used you, I will make you rich amends, by giving you my daughter. All your vexations were but trials of your love, and you have nobly stood the test. Then as my gift, which your true love has worthily purchased, take my daughter, and do not smile that I boast she is above all praise." He then, telling them that he had business which required his presence, desired they would sit down and talk together till he returned; and this command Miranda seemed not at all disposed to disobey.

When Prospero left them, he called his spirit Ariel, who quickly appeared before him, eager to relate what he had done with Prospero's brother and the King of Naples. Ariel said he had left them almost out of their senses with fear, at the strange things he had caused them to see and hear. When fatigued with wandering about, and famished for want of food, he had suddenly set before them a delicious banquet, and then,

just as they were going to eat, he appeared visible before them in the shape of a harpy, a voracious monster with wings, and the feast vanished away. Then, to their utter amazement, this seeming harpy spoke to them, reminding them of their cruelty in driving Prospero from his dukedom, and leaving him and his infant daughter to perish in the sea; saying, that for this cause these terrors were suffered to afflict them.

The King of Naples, and Antonio the false brother, repented the injustice they had done to Prospero; and Ariel told his master he was certain their penitence was sincere, and that he, though a spirit, could not but pity them.

"Then bring them hither, Ariel," said Prospero: "if you, who are but a spirit, feel for their distress, shall not I, who am a human being like themselves, have compassion on them? Bring them, quickly, my dainty Ariel."

Ariel soon returned with the king, Antonio, and old Gonzalo in their train, who had followed him, wondering at the wild music he played in the air to draw them on to his master's presence. This Gonzalo was the same who had so kindly provided Prospero formerly with books and provisions, when his wicked brother left him, as he thought, to perish in an open boat in the sea.

Grief and terror had so stupefied their senses, that they did not know Prospero. He first discovered himself to the good old Gonzalo, calling him the preserver of his life; and then his brother and the king knew that he was the injured Prospero.

Antonio with tears, and sad words of sorrow and true repentance, implored his brother's forgiveness, and the king expressed his sincere remorse for having assisted Antonio to depose his brother: and Prospero forgave them; and, upon their engaging to restore his dukedom, he said to the King of Naples, "I have a gift in store for you too;" and opening a door, showed him his son Ferdinand playing at chess with Miranda.

Nothing could exceed the joy of the father and the son at this unexpected meeting, for they each thought the other drowned in the storm.

"O wonder!" said Miranda, "what noble creatures these are! It must surely be a brave world that has such people in it."

The King of Naples was almost as much astonished at the beauty and excellent graces of the young Miranda, as his son had been. "Who is this maid?" said he; "she seems the goddess that has parted us, and brought us thus together." "No, sir," answered Ferdinand, smiling to find his father had fallen into the same mistake that he had done when he first saw Miranda, "she is a mortal, but by immortal Providence she is mine; I chose her when I could not ask you, my father, for your consent, not thinking you were alive. She is the daughter to this Prospero, who is the famous Duke of Milan, of whose renown I have heard so much, but never saw him till now: of him I have received a new life: he has made himself to me a second father, giving me this dear lady."

"Then I must be her father," said the king; "but oh! how oddly will it sound, that I must ask my child forgiveness."

"No more of that," said Prospero: "let us not remember our troubles past, since they so happily have ended." And then Prospero embraced his brother, and again assured him of his forgiveness; and said that a wise over-ruling Providence had permitted that he should be driven from his poor dukedom of Milan, that his daughter might inherit the crown of Naples, for that by their meeting in this desert island, it had happened that the king's son had loved Miranda.

These kind words which Prospero spoke, meaning to comfort his brother, so filled Antonio with shame and remorse, that he wept and was unable to speak; and the kind old Gonzalo wept to see this joyful reconciliation, and prayed for blessings on the young couple.

Prospero now told them that their ship was safe in the harbour, and the sailors all on board her, and that he and his daughter would accompany them home the next morning. "In the meantime," says he, "partake of such refreshments as my poor cave affords; and for your evening's entertainment I will relate the history of my life from my first landing in this desert island." He then called for Caliban to prepare some food, and set the cave in order; and the company were astonished at the uncouth form and savage appearance of this ugly monster, who (Prospero said) was the only attendant he had to wait upon him.

Before Prospero left the island, he dismissed Ariel from his service, to the great joy of that lively little spirit; who, though he had been a faithful servant to his master, was always longing to enjoy his free liberty, to wander uncontrolled in the air, like a wild bird, under green trees, among pleasant fruits, and sweet-smelling flowers. "My quaint Ariel," said Prospero to the little sprite when he made him free, "I shall miss you; yet you shall have your freedom." "Thank you, my dear master," said Ariel; "but give me leave to attend your ship home with prosperous gales, before you bid farewell to the assistance of your faithful spirit; and then, master, when I am free, how merrily I shall live!" Here Ariel sung this pretty song:

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I;
In a cowslip's bell I lie:
There I crouch when owls do cry
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."

Prospero then buried deep in the earth his magical books and wand, for he was resolved never more to make use of the magic art. And having thus overcome his enemies, and being reconciled to his brother and the King of Naples, nothing now remained to complete his happiness, but to revisit his native land, to take possession of his dukedom, and to witness the happy nuptials of his daughter and Prince Ferdinand, which the king said should be instantly celebrated with great splendour on their return to Naples. At which place, under the safe convoy of the spirit Ariel, they, after a pleasant voyage, soon arrived.



THE OLD EAGLE TREE

The Project Gutenberg EBook of McGuffey's *Fourth Eclectic Reader*
by William Holmes McGuffey

1. In a distant field, stood a large tulip tree, apparently of a century's growth, and one of the most gigantic. It looked like the father of the surrounding forest. A single tree of huge dimensions, standing all alone, is a sublime object.

2. On the top of this tree, an old eagle, commonly called the "Fishing Eagle," had built her nest every year, for many years, and, undisturbed, had raised her young. A remarkable place to choose, as she procured her food from the ocean, and this tree stood full ten miles from the seashore. It had long been known as the "Old Eagle Tree."

3. On a warm, sunny day, the workmen were hoeing corn in an adjoining field. At a certain hour of the day, the old eagle was known to set off for the seaside, to gather food for her young. As she this day returned with a large fish in her claws, the workmen surrounded the tree, and, by yelling and hooting, and throwing stones, so scared the poor bird that she dropped her fish, and they carried it off in triumph.

4. The men soon dispersed, but Joseph sat down under a hush near by, to watch, and to bestow unavailing pity. The bird soon returned to her nest, without food. The eaglets at once set up a cry for food, so shrill, so clear, and so clamorous that the boy was greatly moved.

5. The parent bird seemed to try to soothe them; but their appetites were too keen, and it was all in vain. She then perched herself on a limb near them, and looked down into the nest in a manner that seemed to say, "I know not what to do next."

6. Her indecision was but momentary; again she poised herself, uttered one or two sharp notes, as if telling them to a "lie still," balanced her body, spread her wings, and was away again for the sea.

7. Joseph was determined to see the result. His eye followed her till she grew small, smaller, a mere speck in the sky, and then disappeared. What boy has not thus watched the flight of the bird of his country!

8. She was gone nearly two hours, about double her usual time for a voyage, when she again returned, on a slow, weary wing, flying uncommonly low, in order to have a heavier atmosphere to sustain her, with another fish in her talons.

9. On nearing the field, she made a circuit round it, to see if her enemies were again there. Finding the coast clear, she once more reached the tree, drooping, faint, and weary, and evidently nearly exhausted. Again the eaglets set up their cry, which was soon hushed by the distribution of a dinner, such as, save the cooking, a king might admire.

10. "Glorious bird!" cried the boy, "what a spirit!" Other birds can fly more swiftly, others can sing more sweetly, others scream more loudly; but what other bird, when persecuted and robbed, when weary, when discouraged, when so far from the sea, would do this?

11. "Glorious bird! I will learn a lesson from thee to-day. I will never forget, hereafter, that when the spirit is determined it can do almost anything. Others would have drooped, and hung the head, and mourned over the cruelty of man, and sighed over the wants of the nestlings; but thou, by at once recovering the loss, hast forgotten all."

12. "I will learn of thee, noble bird! I will remember this. I will set my mark high. I will try to do something, and to be something in the world; I will never yield to discouragements."

DEFINITIONS.--1. Cen'tu-ry, the space of a hundred years. Gi-gan'tic, very large. Di-men'sions, size. Sub-lime', grand, noble. 4. Dis-persed', scattered. Un-a-vail'ing, useless. Ea'glets, young eagles. Clam'or-ous, loud, noisy. 6. In-de-ci'sion, want of fixed purpose. Mo'men-ta-ry, for a single moment. 9. Cir'cuit, movement round in a circle. Ex-haust'ed, wholly tired. 11. Nes'-tlings, young birds in the nest.



THE BLACK FAIRY

By Fenton Johnson

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Upward Path*, by Various

Little Annabelle was lying on the lawn, a volume of Grimm before her. Annabelle was nine years of age, the daughter of a colored lawyer, and the prettiest dark child in the village. She had long played in the fairyland of knowledge, and was far advanced for one of her years. A vivid imagination was her chief endowment, and her story creatures often became real flesh-and-blood creatures.

"I wonder," she said to herself that afternoon, "if there is any such thing as a colored fairy? Surely there must be, but in this book they're all white."

Closing the book, her eyes rested upon the landscape that rolled itself out lazily before her. The stalks in the cornfield bent and swayed, their tassels bowing to the breeze, until Annabelle could have easily sworn that those were Indian fairies. And beyond lay the woods, dark and mossy and cool, and there many a something mysterious could have sprung into being, for in the recess was a silvery pool where the children played barefooted. A summer mist like a thin veil hung over the scene, and the breeze whispered tales of far-away lands.

Hist! Something stirred in the hazel bush near her. Can I describe little Annabelle's amazement at finding in the bush a palace and a tall and dark-faced fairy before it?

"I am Amunophis, the Lily of Ethiopia," said the strange creature. "And I come to the children of the Seventh Veil."

She was black and regal, and her voice was soft and low and gentle like the Niger on a summer evening. Her dress was the wing of the sacred beetle, and whenever the wind stirred it played the dreamiest of music. Her feet were bound with golden sandals, and on her head was a crown of lotus leaves.

"And you're a fairy?" gasped Annabelle.

"Yes, I am a fairy, just as you wished me to be. I live in the tall

grass many, many miles away, where a beautiful river called the Niger sleeps." And stretching herself beside Annabelle, on the lawn, the fairy began to whisper:

"I have lived there for over five thousand years. In the long ago a city rested there, and from that spot black men and women ruled the world. Great ships laden with spice and oil and wheat would come to its port, and would leave with wines and weapons of war and fine linens. Proud and great were the black kings of this land, their palaces were built of gold, and I was the Guardian of the City. But one night when I was visiting an Indian grove the barbarians from the North came down and destroyed our shrines and palaces and took our people up to Egypt. Oh, it was desolate, and I shed many tears, for I missed the busy hum of the market and the merry voices of the children.

"But come with me, little Annabelle, I will show you all this, the rich past of the Ethiopian."

She bade the little girl take hold of her hand and close her eyes, and wish herself in the wood behind the cornfield. Annabelle obeyed, and ere they knew it they were sitting beside the clear water in the pond.

"You should see the Niger," said the fairy. "It is still beautiful, but not as happy as in the old days. The white man's foot has been cooled by its water, and the white man's blossom is choking out the native flower." And she dropped a tear so beautiful the costliest pearl would seem worthless beside it.

"Ah! I did not come to weep," she continued, "but to show you the past."

So in a voice sweet and sad she sang an old African lullaby and dropped into the water a lotus leaf. A strange mist formed, and when it had disappeared she bade the little girl to look into the pool. Creeping up Annabelle peered into the glassy surface, and beheld a series of vividly colored pictures.

First she saw dark blacksmiths hammering in the primeval forests and giving fire and iron to all the world. Then she saw the gold of old Ghana and the bronzes of Benin. Then the black Ethiopians poured down upon Egypt and the lands and cities bowed and flamed. Next she saw a

great city with pyramids and stately temples. It was night, and a crimson moon was in the sky. Red wine was flowing freely, and beautiful dusky maidens were dancing in a grove of palms. Old and young were intoxicated with the joy of living, and a sense of superiority could be easily traced in their faces and attitude. Presently red flame hissed everywhere, and the magnificence of remote ages soon crumbled into ash and dust. Persian soldiers ran to and fro conquering the band of defenders and severing the woman and children. Then came the Mohammedans and kingdom on kingdom arose, and with the splendor came ever more slavery.

The next picture was that of a group of fugitive slaves, forming the nucleus of three tribes, hurrying back to the wilderness of their fathers.

In houses built as protection against the heat the blacks dwelt, communing with the beauty of water and sky and open air. It was just between twilight and evening and their minstrels were chanting impromptu hymns to their gods of nature. And as she listened closely, Annabelle thought she caught traces of the sorrow songs in the weird pathetic strains of the African music mongers. From the East the warriors of the tribe came, bringing prisoners, whom they sold to white strangers from the West.

"It is the beginning," whispered the fairy, as a large Dutch vessel sailed westward. Twenty boys and girls bound with strong ropes were given to a miserable existence in the hatchway of the boat. Their captors were strange creatures, pale and yellow haired, who were destined to sell them as slaves in a country cold and wild, where the palm trees and the cocoanut never grew and men spoke a language without music. A light, airy creature, like an ancient goddess, flew before the craft guiding it in its course.

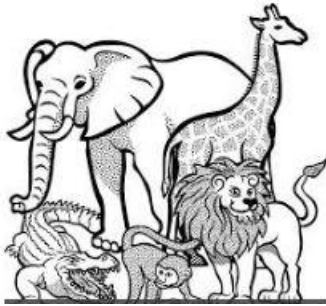
"That is I," said the fairy. "In that picture I am bringing your ancestors to America. It was my hope that in the new civilization I could build a race that would be strong enough to redeem their brothers. They have gone through great tribulations and trials, and have mingled with the blood of the fairer race; yet though not entirely Ethiopian they have not lost their identity. Prejudice is a furnace through which molten gold is poured. Heaven be merciful unto all races! There is one

more picture--the greatest of all, but--farewell, little one, I am going."

"Going?" cried Annabelle. "Going? I want to see the last picture--and when will you return, fairy?"

"When the race has been redeemed. When the brotherhood of man has come into the world; and there is no longer a white civilization or a black civilization, but the civilization of all men. I belong to the world council of the fairies, and we are all colors and kinds. Why should not men be as charitable unto one another? When that glorious time comes I shall walk among you and be one of you, performing my deeds of magic and playing with the children of every nation, race and tribe. Then, Annabelle, you shall see the last picture--and the best."

Slowly she disappeared like a summer mist, leaving Annabelle amazed.



AHMOW—THE WOLF

By Frederick Schwatka

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Wide Awake Third Reader*, by Clara Murray

I

Little Ahmow was an Eskimo boy. He lived with his parents on the bleak northern shore of Hudson Bay.

During the long Arctic winter these Eskimos kill the walrus which live at the edge of the ice. In the short summer they hunt them on the islands near the shore.

The walrus meat is cut into strips and sewed up in bags made of the

walrus skin. This is to keep the dogs from stealing and eating it.

The walrus oil is put into casks to be used in the dark winter months for heat and light.

Ahmow's father killed many walrus every summer and stored the meat and oil on the islands. Then in the winter he rode over on the ice to get it.

One cold winter day, when Ahmow was ten years old, his father said, "To-morrow I shall go to the island for oil."

"We need meat, too," said his wife, "and food for the dogs."

"May I go with you, father?" said Ahmow. "I will help you all I can."

[Illustration]

"No," answered Nannook. "It is far and you are only a boy."

Ahmow begged so hard that at last his father said he might go.

"But it will be a long cold ride, and there are often bears and wolves on the island."

So Ahmow dressed himself in his new reindeer suit that his mother had made, and pulled his sealskin cap well over his ears.

He helped his father get ready for the long, cold journey. First they put a thick coating of ice on the sledge-runners. Then they filled two sealskin bags with food and water.

They called the dogs and harnessed them to the sledge. There were eight of them, and they could run like the wind.

Last of all Ahmow crawled into the house, bade his mother good-by, and brought out the long whip.

Nannook wrapped his little boy in a bearskin, cracked his whip over the dogs, and away they flew over the ice. Oh, how happy Ahmow was!

II

After a while the dogs stopped running and began to trot, and Ahmow looked about over the vast fields of ice.

Not a tree, not a house, not a person was in sight. As far as he could see there was nothing but ice and snow. Everything was still and white in the dim light.

When they had nearly reached the island, what did they see but a huge polar bear! He was prowling around the oil casks, looking for something to eat.

Nannook unharnessed the dogs at once. "Go," he cried, and they raced across the ice after the bear.

The bear was so big and clumsy that he could not run fast. The dogs soon surrounded him, and held him until Nannook came running up to shoot him.

Ahmow helped his father skin the bear and cut up the meat. Then they loaded the sledge with a cask of oil, some walrus meat, the bearskin, and part of the bear meat.

After eating their luncheon, Ahmow was again rolled up in the bear rug, and they started for home. Nannook walked beside the sledge. The dogs walked too, because the load was so heavy.

When they were nearly halfway home, Nannook saw some reindeer.

"Watch the dogs, Ahmow," he said, "and I will try to shoot one of those reindeer. Then we can have a fine dinner."

So he took the gun and ran swiftly over the snow. Soon he was out of sight, and Ahmow was alone with the dogs.

The little boy played with the dogs at first, but after a while they curled up and went to sleep.

Ahmow was sleepy, too, and it was so warm in the bear rug that he almost went to sleep.

All at once he heard a growl, then a dog barked. Ahmow was wide awake and listening. "What is it, Naka?" he said to the dog that barked.

Naka barked again, and the hair stood up straight on his back.

Ahmow stood up and looked about. There was a fierce, hungry-looking wolf coming toward him! He looked again! One, two, three, four wolves were leaping over the snow!

The boy threw off the rug, and seized his father's whip and walrus spear. "Come here," he called to the dogs. "Come here to the sledge."

Then, as the wolves came nearer, he jumped into the cask of meat.

[Illustration]

One big wolf ran up to the sledge. Ahmow leaned over and struck him with the whip with all his might. The wolf howled and turned back.

Another wolf would have killed one of the dogs, but Ahmow threw out a big piece of bear meat. The wolf seized the meat and began to eat it.

Now a third wolf came up to the sledge. Just then Ahmow saw his father running toward him.

"He will drive the wolves away," he thought, "but I should like to kill one if I can."

So he held the spear as he had seen his father hold it. As the wolf came nearer, he raised it. As the wolf jumped, he threw it with all his might right into the wide-open mouth. There was a howl, a growl, and then the wolf tried to run away. But Ahmow wound the spear line around the sledge post and held it tight.

Nannook shot two of the wolves, but the one that had the meat got away with it.

Then as he ran to the sledge, "Look, father," cried Ahmow. "See this fine wolf, with the sharp nose, and the bushy tail. He is held fast with the walrus line, and he has eaten the walrus spear."

"Well done, lad," said his father. "You will be a good hunter. Now, you shall have a spear of your own and you shall go with me on the big hunts."

So from that day the boy was a hunter, and the people in the village called him "Ahmow," which means, "little wolf."



THE TIMID HARES

A Hindu Tale, from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Young and Field Literary Readers, Book 2*, by Ella Flagg Young and Walter Taylor Field

Once there was a timid little hare who was always afraid something dreadful was going to happen.

She was always saying, "What if the earth should fall in? What would happen to me then?"

One day, after she had been saying this to herself many times, a great coconut fell from a tree.

"What was that!" said the hare.

She jumped as if she had been shot.

"The earth must be falling in!" she cried.

So she ran and she ran as fast as she could run.

Soon she met another hare.

"O Brother Hare," she said, "run for your life! The earth is falling in!"

"What is that you say!" cried the other hare. "Then I will run, too."

This hare told another hare, and the other hare told other hares, and soon all the hares were running as fast as they could run, and crying:

"The earth is falling in! O, the earth is falling in!"

The big beasts heard them, and they too began to run and to cry:

"O, the earth is falling in! Run for your life!"

A wise old lion saw them running and heard them crying.

"I cannot see that the earth is falling in," he said.

Then he cried out to the poor frightened beasts to stop.

"What are you saying?" he asked.

"We said the earth is falling in," answered the elephants.

"What makes you think so?" asked the lion.

"The tigers told us," said the elephants.

"What makes the tigers think so?"

"The bears told us," said the tigers.

"What makes the bears think so?"

"The buffaloes told us," said the bears.

"Why do the buffaloes think so?"

"The deer told us," said the buffaloes.

"Why do the deer think so?"

"The monkeys told us so," said the deer.

"And how did the monkeys know?"

"The jackals said so," said the monkeys.

"And how did the jackals know?"

"The hares said it was so," said the jackals.

"And how did the hares know?"

One of the hares then said that another hare told him, and the other hare said that another told him, and so it went on until at last they came to the first little hare.

"Little hare," said the lion, "why did you say that the earth was falling in?"

"I saw it," said the little hare.

"Where?" asked the lion.

"I saw it there, under that big coconut tree," said the little hare.

"Come and show me," said the lion.

"O, no, no!" said the little hare. "I am so frightened. I couldn't go."

"Jump on my back," said the lion.

The little hare at last jumped up on the lion's back, and the lion took her back to the big tree.

Just then another coconut fell with a great noise among the leaves.

"O, run, run!" cried the timid hare. "There is that dreadful thing again!"

"Stop and look," said the lion.

As the hare could not get down from the lion's back, she had to stop and look.

"Now what do you think it is?" asked the lion.

"I think it must be a coconut," said the little hare.

"Then I think you had better go and tell the other beasts," said the lion.

So the little hare told the other beasts that the earth was not falling in, after all. It was a coconut that was falling.



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